CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS

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TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY DAVID AMES CURTIS

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Foreword
David Ames Curtis

The third and final volume of Cornelius Castoriadis's *Political and Social Writings* (*PSW*) contains an extraordinary wealth and variety of texts ranging from 1961 until 1979. Borrowing from the titles of two major chapters, this concluding selection of translations from the Editions 10/18 series is subtitled "Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society." Unique in the body of Castoriadis's work, these writings enlarge on themes elaborated in his previous articles for *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (*S. ou B.*, Socialism or barbarism), the revolutionary journal and group he founded in 1949, while confronting them not only with new historical experiences but also with his philosophical explorations. *PSW 3* provides key elements for a radical renewal of emancipatory thought and action as it offers English-speaking readers an irreplaceable, but hitherto missing, perspective on postwar French thought.[1]

As I suggested in my foreword to *PSW 1*, these writings should be read as open reflections on prospects for social change, to be developed and deepened into themes for improvisation, not as ultimate answers to be embraced (or rejected) as such. In volume 3 we witness Castoriadis himself doing just that: he did not rest content that his view of workers' management as response to Stalinism[2] had been borne out by the establishment of workers' councils during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution,[3] nor did he merely repeat the wide-ranging conclusions he had drawn for socialism from this mass insurrection against bureaucratic capitalism and Russian domination.[4] Indeed, the second volume concluded with a new departure, "Modern Capitalism and Revolution." *MCR* not only challenged Marxist economic and social theory but also offered a new revolutionary perspective informed both by the profound changes capitalism was undergoing and by his complex conception of the antinomy within modern capitalist society, where the system must simultaneously solicit and deny people's creativity and can survive only through people's resistance to all it com-

mands of them, thus encouraging further expressions of autonomous activity and thereby contestation of the system.

In light of the critical reception of *PSW 1* and *2*, a second open suggestion for reading Castoriadis's writing is warranted. Carl Boggs, an intelligent and sympathetic reviewer, laments that those two volumes "do not go beyond 1960—and thus could not be influenced by the intellectual and political upheavals that followed."[5] "Yet," he continues in anticipation,

> Castoriadis claimed, as late as 1974, that the main ideas developed in Socialism or Barbarism had been confirmed by subsequent historical experience. But surely the appearance of new social movements in the West have outstripped his theoretical premises and rendered his political outlook largely obsolete. Even so, this cannot cancel out Castoriadis' unique contributions to the emergence of a post-Marxist radicalism in the West.

Let me be frank. My purpose in translating Castoriadis was not to present him as a courageous old guy whose ideas have now been surpassed by "post-Marxists"—certainly not the man who wrote that Marxism had become "the flesh and blood of the world we combat"; this tendency to "post" everything nowadays, Castoriadis himself notes, evinces the contemporary age's inability to say anything *positive* about what it actually believes or wants. Rather, I believed that a critical engagement with his reflections on social change could have *relevancy today* for those who want to think about and act for the transformation of society along lines of individual and collective autonomy. My suggestion, then, is not to read Castoriadis as a "precursor," a "continuator," a "post-er" of this or "post-ed" by that, but as an original thinker whose originality consists, in large part, in his relentless emphasis on and elucidation of people's capacities for creative originality. The writings presented here show, I believe, that in his originality and his pertinence he still challenges us today.

When Castoriadis stated that *MCR* had been "confirmed by experience,"[6] he placed this phrase between quotation marks, for his conclusions primarily were based not on voluminous empirical data boxed into social-scientific paradigms but on a new conception of socialism as people's assertion of autonomy in their everyday lives; confirmation, he said, came as reality itself developed along lines he had already sketched. To test this bold claim, one must first comprehend the originality of his views. At the dawn of the 1960s, Castoriadis argued that Gaullism was not a precursor to a renewed fascism but an index of France's entry into the stage of modern capitalism; that, beyond the workplace, political activity on the part of the industrial proletariat in Western countries had disappeared; that privatization, consumerism, and the bureaucratization of all aspects of people's lives were becoming the rule; that youth and women would be in the forefront of those entering into action against these processes as they and others came to express a tendency toward autonomy in their invention of new forms of living; and that new revolutionary explosions would not replicate in reality the (already false) Marxist-Leninist model of "economic contradictions" leading to demands for the dictatorship of a party ad-

vocating nationalization and planning, but rather would express unforeseeable attempts by all strata to reconstruct their lives in democratic, grass-roots fashion.

To establish a continuing Marxist "productivism," Boggs[7] quotes Castoriadis: "[T]he fundamental contradictions of capitalism are to be found in production and work."[8] He fails to mention, however, that Castoriadis's overall argument was meant to show that the "bureaucratic-capitalist project" entailed the *extension of these contradictions to all spheres of social life*—and the generalization and radicalization of people's responses to this simultaneous sollication and denial of their autonomy. Boggs adds:

> Though Castoriadis pays lip service to the role of broad social forces outside the spheres of production (e.g., youth, minorities, women), he never incorporates these forces into his overall understanding of social change. Thus, while the Frankfurt School theorists—not to mention some liberal sociologists—had already begun to explore "mediations" of this sort (the family, the culture industry, consumerism, the mass media, education), these phenomena receive little attention from Castoriadis.

Those who have read *MCR*'s 13-point concluding summary know, however, that these concerns were precisely those Castoriadis had made central to his conception of revolutionary change—though not as "complex elements of social structure . . . that mediate political conflicts" (Boggs) but as responses of the bureaucratic-capitalist system and as people's counterexpressions of their tendency toward autonomy in the struggle for social transformation. As readers of volume 3 will discover, these concerns, which became the focus for the upheavals of the 1960s, are those Castoriadis was then enlarging upon—despite bitter resistance from the then-Marxist rear guard within the group.

Let us recall two key historical facts in relation to Socialisme ou Barbarie. First, S. ou B.'s work was carried out amid the embarrassed silence or open hostility of the entire established French Left. Among its few interlocutors: Edgar Morin, the former editor of *Arguments*, whose attempted theoretical renewal of Marxism ended in 1962; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the classical scholar who played a prominent role in the struggle against the Algerian War; and former S. ou B. member Claude Lefort. Together with François Châtelet and another classical scholar, Jean-Pierre Vernant, starting in 1963 they participated with Castoriadis in the Cercle Saint-Just—later renamed the Centre de recherches et d'études sociales et politiques (CRESP; the Center for Social and Political Research and Studies).[9] Let us also note here that such silence did not entail isolation: the review sold well during the early 1960s and influenced the student rebels of May 1968.[10]

The second historical fact to recollect is that even as early as October 1959,[11] when Castoriadis first drafted *MCR*, its new revolutionary perspective was contested by many within S. ou B. itself. Attempts were made to prevent or to delay publication; *MCR* only appeared thirteen months later, with a disclaimer. Far from merely "paying lip service" to what would later be labeled "new social movements," and hardly failing to provide a "theoretical basis" for these movements' potential for

autonomous (not "mediational") activity, Castoriadis had to fight tooth and nail just to bring his original insights to public view.

Castoriadis labeled "neopaleo-Marxists" those who opposed his criticisms of Marxism and his views concerning the potential for autonomous activity on the part of youth, women, and others suffering a "double oppression"[12] under capitalism. A decade after S. ou B. had broken with Trotskyism over the Russian question and over the issue of workers' management, some in the group still wished merely to follow a "correct Trotskyist line," incapable as they were of seeing either the massive changes modern capitalism had wrought or the vast new opportunities for social self-transformation people's responses to these changes had created. The "antitendency," as it would call itself, offered nothing to replace key S. ou B. texts; it merely reiterated a conviction in the primacy of class struggle so as to ignore both the new role of students in Algerian War protests and the significance of an influx of youths into the group.

One S. ou B. member who eventually joined in the antitendency's noncritique was Jean-François Lyotard. As Claude Lefort commented soon after *Economie Libidinale* was published, "It is really hilarious how Lyotard, who then strapped himself into a Bolshevik uniform and who played Trotsky to Castoriadis-Lenin, is the same Lyotard who now plays with madness."[13] Even stranger perhaps, if not more humorous, will be this image of Lyotard as modern revolutionary for those who have embraced Lyotard the postmodernist who contests the very possibility of revolution. But one of my purposes is to show that one cannot fully understand French postwar intellectual history until one fully recognizes Castoriadis's contribution and understands the role of—and the conflicts within—S. ou B.[14]

Volume 3 begins with a test and application of *MCR*. During its publication,[15] what Castoriadis then called "the most outstanding event in the postwar era" after Poland/Hungary 1956 occurred in Belgium. Unknown to most Americans today, these 1961 Belgian strikes—touched off by another attempt at capitalist modernization, less grudgingly accepted than De Gaulle's—blanketed the whole country, lasted a full month, brought large segments of the population into action, and saw strong participation by women and youth. In "The Signification of the Belgian Strikes," Castoriadis took these strikes as confirmation both of his critique of Marxist scenarios for mass working-class struggle and of his view that new struggles would express people's tendency toward autonomous action beyond the confines of traditional organizations. At the same time, however, his assessment of the actual expressions of this tendency were not wholly positive. While the strikes had garnered mass support and had unfolded outside the unions' bureaucratic bounds, the Belgian workers' failure to form independent, direct-democratic organs of action and decision-making—when nothing prevented them from doing so—indicated that their will to autonomy was not being asserted in full. For the group, a compensating factor was the creation of Pouvoir Ouvrier Belge (Belgian Workers' Power), one year after Socialism Reaffirmed (later Solidarity) had been formed among British ex-Trotskyists.[16]

A similar analysis was applied in Castoriadis's examination of the 1963 mass

strike in the French coal mines. "The Miners' Strike" discusses the limitations of strikes that, unfolding outside the bounds of traditional union activity, occur only *in order to* propel the union bureaucracy into action—quite a different dynamic from the American wildcat strikes described earlier, where workers attacked the unions head-on.[17] This article was not well received by members of the "antitendency," who, being in the majority on the editorial board of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* (*PO*), S. ou B.'s popularized monthly newsletter, defeated the proposal to print it as an editorial.

Faced with the temporizing of the minority faction, Castoriadis and other S. ou B. members decided something should be done to force a principled confrontation. They met separately to draw up an internal document, "For a New Orientation," consisting of an introduction and two texts entitled "On the Orientation of Our Propaganda" (October 1962) and "On the Orientation of Our Activities" (March 1963). Hoping that the ideas of their "tendency" would soon be accepted by the entire group, they presented these texts for debate, to be followed by a rapid decision concerning the contents. Instead, the newly constituted, and wholly negative, "antitendency" dragged out discussion until a "scission" developed. The result was an amicable division in June 1963, the minority "antitendency" retaining the name and the newspaper *PO*, the majority retaining the review as well as the group's original name.

We can only begin to summarize here the breadth and the depth of this text, which led to an irrevocable split between those who wished to continue the revolutionary project in modern times and those who held to Marxist nostrums at all costs. In addition to the insights of Boggs's liberal sociologists, Castoriadis also proposed that the group critically integrate the best in the work of contemporary anthropologists, historians, psychoanalytical theorists, and urbanists. The problems—and the responses—of students, young workers, the elderly, women, families, and educators were to be discussed; analyzed via interviews, firsthand accounts, and studies; and incorporated by bringing people from these and other social categories into contact with the group. Moreover, Castoriadis proposed to the group's female members what later would be called "consciousness-raising sessions" several years before the American New Left first confronted the "woman's issue" and responded only with derisory pronouncements on woman's "place" ("Chicks Up Front!" shouted during police confrontations; "The only position for women in the Movement is on their backs!"). As far as vestiges of "workerism" or "productivism" are concerned, Castoriadis had this to say:

> We first must smash the *framework* within which ["left-wing" organizations'] ideology and their propaganda are placed, that of a modification in the operation of the economy brought about by a political change. The crisis of society and of culture is total, and the revolution will be total or it will not be at all.

The only limits were those of people's imaginations—and resistance from the Marxist rear guard. In light of Boggs's comment on "lip service," we read these lines:

> The continuous elaboration of our ideology—which, one has the impression, is given only lip service by some of the comrades in the

> organization—is today, as never before, a sine qua non condition for there to be revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary activity worthy of the name.

Boggs has gotten things backwards. Like the Students for a Democratic Society's "Port Huron Statement," also written in 1962, "For a New Orientation" is an indispensable landmark for those who want to retrace the historical and theoretical path of the emancipatory movement and to extend and broaden it today.

This internal document projected S. ou B. members' becoming "the animators and the guides of a vast ideological current." It was not to be. "Recommencing the Revolution" (*RR*),[18] Castoriadis's public presentation and elaboration of "For a New Orientation," precipitated the scission. An October 1963 open letter, reprinted in the Postface to this article, informs the review's subscribers and the group's supporters. In a long endnote, I have updated the history of this split, examining Lyotard's diverse, and mutually contradictory, accounts.

Summary of *RR* also would be impossible here. What should be emphasized is its centrality to S. ou B.'s overall work. Here Castoriadis challenged key features of the group's outlook, including his own original conception of class, the *director/executant* division: one finds pure examples of these types only at the two ends of the spectrum of social and labor relations; most people perform tasks and play roles combining both functions, increasingly so as a pyramidal bureaucratic hierarchy invades old spheres and creates new ones. He also states the corollary of his bold self-criticism:

> The revolution will come into being the day the immense majority of the laboring people who populate the bureaucratic pyramid will attack this pyramid and the small minority who rule it. And it will not occur a day sooner. In the meantime, the only differentiation of genuinely practical importance is the one that exists at almost all levels of the pyramid (save at the very top, obviously) between those who *accept* the system and those who, in the everyday reality of production, *combat* it.

This new analytical division between acceptance and rejection of the system was not limited, however, to the sphere of production. Central to social self-transformation are all movements contesting bureaucratic-capitalist society's simultaneous destruction of the old meanings of people's lives and denial of the new meanings they thereby create:

> Above all, we find the permanent effort of people to live their lives, to give their lives a meaning in an era where nothing is certain any longer and where, in any case, nothing from without is accepted at face value. In the course of this effort there tends to be realized for the first time in the history of humanity people's aspiration for autonomy. For that very reason, this effort is *just as important* for the preparation of the socialist revolution as are the analogous manifestations in the domain of production (emphasis added).

RR is not a blueprint for a revolutionary organization's power ambitions, based on a new "theory" of people's autonomous activity, but an open invitation to reflect on

and to contribute to the emergence of this self-activity for purposes of social self-transformation. Castoriadis concludes the second section of this essay with a prescient and open-ended anticipation of what would follow:

> If one takes seriously the character of the revolution as total, if one understands that workers' management does not signify only a certain type of machinery but also a certain type of people, then it also must be recognized that this tendency is *just as important* as an index of the revolution as the workers' tendency to combat the bureaucratic management of the business enterprise—even if we do not yet see the collective manifestations of this former tendency, nor how it could lead to organized activities (emphasis added).

In retrospect, it is understandable that the antitendency was reluctant to follow Castoriadis off the relatively comfortable precipice of vanguard politics and into the abyss of a social practice whose "theory" no longer even informs one in advance which actors will perform exactly what roles; in light of the subsequent proliferation of emancipatory movements, we may wonder, equally, why anyone claiming to be a revolutionary resisted it.

We include two examples of Castoriadis's contributions to this new departure. "Sexual Education in the USSR" looks at the Russian bureaucracy's attempt to recognize that the "New Soviet Man" is a sexual being. The point of this review of a Khrushchev-era sex-education primer was to emphasize once again[19] that one's response to the "sexual function" is as important to the maintenance of an oppressive regime—or to its revolutionary transformation—as one's attitude toward the "economic function." "Student Youth" makes good Castoriadis's promise to focus on youth issues. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet has commented, this March 1963 article was "one of the texts in which one senses the coming crisis, and the review was nearly alone in the echo it gave to the September 1964 revolt of Berkeley students."[20]

Castoriadis was charting an independent course for S. ou B. in relation to the emerging youth revolt by rejecting both the standard Marxist-Leninist/Trotskyist view that students were unimportant—because not "real workers"—and the position of the French student union, the UNEF, which followed up its unprecedented actions in opposition to the Algerian War with traditional demands for mere improvements in the present educational system, a system that is a key basis for society's division between intellectual and manual labor. Castoriadis, in contrast, advocated a revolutionizing of this system as he highlighted the conflict, internal to the operation of the University, between its "social function" of reproduction of the existing order and its "cultural function" of unfettered inquiry. He noted that students were becoming a numerically significant and politically active social category at the same time that bureaucracy was proliferating in academia and in intellectual-technical occupations in a way inextricably linked to the overall crisis of society. Castoriadis surmised that "through his very contact with the University, the student will be led to put into question the culture offered him, the relationship this culture maintains with society at large, and the very structure of society itself." The fecund strategy was not to demand student aid for "sons of workers" within the present system (the

program equally of the UNEF and of the French Communist party [PCF]) or to guilt-trip students into leaving the University for the factories (the pre- and post-1968 French Maoist position), but a generalized contestation of the University from within (which led, in May 1968, to students opening the University to everyone). Having no illusions that all, or even a majority, would naturally adopt this critical attitude toward their own education, Castoriadis nevertheless projected that "for a minority of students, elements for a revolutionary raising of consciousness will be brought together, and a lasting political engagement, based upon criticism of the bureaucratic organization of society, will become possible."

We include two final articles from the *S. ou B.* period. "The Crisis of Modern Society" summarizes, for Solidarity's British audience, many of the issues discussed above. Castoriadis's idea of a generalized crisis of society, extending even to scientific and other "disinterested" activities, will become a recurrent theme, to be found at the end of "The Anticipated Revolution" and in "Social Transformation and Cultural Creation" in the present volume as well as in his subsequent work on epistemology[21] and aesthetics.[22] "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy" updates Castoriadis's work on the "Russian question" as it extends his critique of Leninism from "Proletariat and Organization."[23] Alongside its consideration of autonomous working-class activity in the period before the Bolsheviks gained total control,[24] this introduction to *S. ou B.*'s French translation of *The Workers' Opposition*, by Alexandra Kollontai, pushes to the limit Castoriadis's emphasis on the role of bureaucratization in the process of modernization. Marxism's economistic outlook renders it incapable of accounting for the bureaucracy's emergence: "It obviously makes no sense to say that the Chinese bureaucracy is the product of the country's industrialization when it would be infinitely more reasonable to say that the industrialization of China is the product of the bureaucracy's accession to power." Rejecting the "Third-Worldism" sponsored by this Chinese bureaucracy and advocated by those whose dissatisfaction with Khrushchevism did not extend to a concomitant critique of the Stalinist bureaucracies of "revolutionary" regimes in emerging nations, Castoriadis offers a clear-eyed overview of the different ways in which countries have industrialized. "We can move beyond this antinomy," he continues like a splash of cold water, "only by pointing out that in the present epoch, and short of a revolutionary transformation on an international scale, a backward country can industrialize only by becoming bureaucratized." Castoriadis's new analytical division between acceptance and rejection of the system thus was not a simplistic voluntaristic proclamation, unrelated to actual historical experience.

Castoriadis's mention of human beings' different "functions" might lead one to think that he subscribed to the *functionalist* outlook shared by utilitarian and Marxian conceptions of economy, society, sexuality, and culture, an outlook being challenged at the time by structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Examining these "functions," Castoriadis discerned on the contrary *the wide variety of human responses*, not any determinate characteristics. The same could be said, moreover, of "structures," which should be understood as socially and historically instituted de novo, not as rearrangements of timeless and fixed elements. In "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory" (*MRT*), which was published in the last five issues of the

journal but which began as a "Note on the Marxist Philosophy of History" circulated within the group in 1959, Castoriadis developed his own original anthropological challenge to functionalism, structuralism, Marxism, and, more generally, all deterministic explanations of society and culture. Published with a long second section as a separate book in 1975, this ground-breaking study did not appear in the Editions 10/18 series and thus is not included in the present volume.[25] Besides mentioning his critique of determinism, his elucidation of the revolutionary project, his new definition of praxis as activity aimed at the autonomy of one's self and of (an indeterminate number of) others, the role he accorded to the imagination, and his introduction of such key terms as the "symbolic" and the "imaginary," "instituting" and "instituted society," the "ensemblistic-identitary," "*teukhein*," and "*legein*," the "psychical monad" and the "social-historical," "making/doing" [*faire*] and "magmas," let us note that *MRT* marks the author's definitive break with Marxism. In the context of the 1960s, it provided a basis for the liquidation of structuralism well in advance of its practical liquidation in 1968, and it constituted a challenge to Althusser's pretensions to a Marxist "science." Explicitly citing *MRT* as one example, Castoriadis later explained,[26]

> Long before May '68, structuralism had been questioned, both in its content as such and in its political implications. Those who lived through those times can testify that being a militant at the beginning of the 1960s in contact with certain student and university circles in Paris entailed taking a stand against structuralism in general and Althusser in particular. Althusser . . . did not wait long to go on the counterattack and to declare as early as 1964 that educational programs and structures were in their essence exempt from the "class struggle."

Appropriately, it was among those who *least* understood the radical potential of student protest, the French Maoists, that Althusser's teachings were most readily embraced.

Volume 3 continues with the 1967 S. ou B. letter, sent to subscribers and supporters, announcing its dissolution. Castoriadis expressed his disappointment that the review had been treated as a consumer object, not as a site of participation for autonomous movements of contestation. He also admits that his hope that the French workers would adopt the independent behavior exhibited by their American and British counterparts in wildcat strikes and in the shop stewards' movement[27] never materialized. I have added a long endnote presenting my research, based on interviews with former S. ou B. members, concerning the period after publication of the last issue (June 1965). For Castoriadis's part, the key issue was the development of a revolutionary group owing nothing to traditional Marxist ideology or forms of organization. He found this impossible in mid-1960s France; the philosophical issues he was developing, as exemplified in *MRT*, made continuation of a practical revolutionary group and journal all the more difficult.[28]

The May 1968 French student-worker rebellion came as a striking confirmation—both in its negative and its positive aspects—of the new orientation Castoriadis was developing in the 1960s. As noted before,[29] French student leader Daniel Cohn-

Bendit freely admitted his "plagiarism" of Castoriadis's ideas. What I reveal in an endnote to "Suspension of Publication of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*," perhaps for the first time in print, is that, in addition to his introduction to S. ou B. through his older brother, Gabriel, "Danny" met with former S. ou B. members who established "Communisme ou Barbarie" (a.k.a. "Groupe Bororo") in 1967. C. ou B. members participated in the March 22, 1968, Nanterre University building occupation. Former members of S. ou B. and its offshoots, ICO and PO, aided the student rebels, who had asked them to draft some of their leaflets. And in relation to the celebrated May '68 slogan, "Power to the Imagination," let us not forget Castoriadis's early emphasis on the role of the imagination.

"The Anticipated Revolution" is Castoriadis's remarkable analysis of the key social actors in the May '68 drama. In the comparisons to *Hamlet* and *Lear*, the idea of a "permanent revolution filmed twice in reverse," the analogy of youth as playwright for a new, nonclassical revolutionary theater, and the exposure of the Communists' duplicity and of their complicity in the Gaullist system, it is comparable to the best of Marx's sociological and historical essays. The first part, originally entitled "Reflect, Act, Organize," was distributed during the events by former S. ou B. members and by some of their children, now old enough to participate.[30] In the full text, published in June along with articles by Morin and Lefort as *La Brèche* (The breach), Castoriadis singled out, by way of explanation of May '68's ultimate collapse, the students' workerist reflexes, the rearguard role played not only by the PCF but by the working class as a whole, and the historical lack of a viable revolutionary organization. The entry of student activists into Trotskyist and Maoist "microbureaucracies" after the ebbing of these antiauthoritarian protests soon confirmed, for Castoriadis, his highly contrasted assessment of the potential for autonomous activity in modern capitalist society. His initial response, in the final section of the article, to the movement's difficulties was to highlight the problems of education, knowledge, and power implicitly raised and given new meaning by the students in their challenge to existing educational authorities and practices. Foucault's subsequent rhetoric identifying power with knowledge and his previous refusal (in 1965) to support a student strike provide an indication of structuralism's and poststructuralism's irrelevancy to the movement of contestation within a university setting.[31]

"The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement," Castoriadis's 1973 introduction to the two 10/18 volumes on working-class struggle, provides an essential link between the "early" and "later" Castoriadis.[32] Those who are inspired by Castoriadis's political and social writings but who consider the later philosophical work abstract or impractical will have to digest this article's trenchant criticisms of all his previous interpretations of working-class experience. Those who view favorably his "theoretical" work on the psyche and imaginary institution but who see no relation to his revolutionary "past" will discover here the concrete background and motivations for his later writings. Finally, everyone—including those like myself who find the "early"/"later" distinction artificial—will read with profit his description of the revolutionary project: "the open engendering of significations oriented toward a radical transformation of the social-historical world; borne by an activity

that modifies the conditions under which it unfolds, the goals it gives itself, and the agents who accomplish it; and unified by the idea of the *autonomy* of man and of society." This summary offers an immensely broadened conception of revolutionary activity; it also implies both a recognition of the working class's role in the fostering of this project and a realization that neither it nor any other social group can be identified as that project's exclusive bearer.

Two 1974 articles, "Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes" and "Self-Management and Hierarchy," mercilessly destroy the ideological arguments that pass for justifications of wage inequality and social hierarchy under both capitalist and "socialist" regimes. They are especially relevant now that the final practical demonstration of the existence of huge inequalities in Eastern Europe and in the erstwhile "Soviet Union," and of people's opposition to them there, is immediately being drowned out by a revival of "free-market" rhetoric. Castoriadis's discussion of the immediate social and political effects of wage and job inequality should be read and reread by all.[33]

Given Castoriadis's trenchant criticisms of traditional union structures, some will be surprised to find that these texts were published in a union newsletter. Besides noting that Castoriadis never opposed people's joining unions,[34] let us recall the changed situation after 1968. Workers' management, long advocated by S. ou B. but now repackaged as "self-management" (*autogestion*), had been incorporated into the rhetoric of the established French Left. Castoriadis's articles were designed to raise the issue of "self-management" in the most radical way possible and to urge union members to raise it themselves within their own unions. That a large established union was willing to allow any such talk is indicative of the changes wrought by May '68.[35]

"The Revolutionary Exigency" is an interview with the left-Christian French journal, *Esprit*, which offered Castoriadis the opportunity to provide an overview of his work as economist, psychoanalyst, social thinker, philosopher, and revolutionary, and to discuss the connection between what might seem disparate aspects of his work. He also discusses the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and that of Merleau's former student, Claude Lefort, in relation to his own conception of institutionalization. Castoriadis explains that the historically specific project of a revolutionary self-transformation of society (already to be distinguished from his general conception of societal "self-institution") does not necessarily entail the illusion of "self-transparency." "What amuses me," Castoriadis adds, "is that, first of all, I was, if I am not mistaken, the first to have criticized the idea of postrevolutionary society as 'transparent for itself' . . . ; and secondly, that I have responded in advance and at length to this type of objection, whereas I have never seen any refutation, discussion, or even a simple taking into account of this response of mine."[36]

"The Hungarian Source" offers a twenty-year retrospective on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Conventional wisdom[37] has it that Solidarity's struggle in Poland and the Eastern European uprisings of 1989 demonstrate that "civil society"—a term used by advocates of a continued role for the State—not workers' councils—which challenge the very existence of a separate state apparatus—is the wave of the future. In his defense and exposition of the signification of the Hungarian workers' councils, Castoriadis first raises the question: Who really supported the councils in the

first place? Not an "independent left-wing intellectual" like Sartre, despite his "condemnation" of Russian tanks; not the Trotskyists, who did not know how to play a vanguard role opposite such a spontaneous outburst of opposition to a "degenerated Workers' State"; and not the established Western Left, which might then have put its own hierarchal structures into jeopardy. One might be amused to read Castoriadis's 1976 statement: "Today, the *relevant* reactionary ideas are, of course, the ideas of the bureaucracy – not those of [then-candidate] Ronald Reagan." But the "antigovernment" *President* Reagan never reversed the overall trend of ever-increasing amounts of capital passing through the public sector. The major world-wide trend today seems to be capital concentration within competing economic blocs: a proposed hemispheric American free-trade zone; a European Community bloc, perhaps soon extending from the Atlantic to, if not the Urals, at least the Bug River (on Poland's eastern border); and a Japan expanding throughout the Far East. In this context of renewed supranational bloc formation offering little hint even of democratic "checks," the civil society/State grid is becoming as analytically irrelevant to the workings of the emerging world disorder as it has been theoretically untenable from the start. Who is to say that the *principles* – not formulas – laid down by the courageous and far-sighted workers of Budapest thirty-five years ago are any less relevant than such an antiquated notion?

Occasioned by the media appearance of the so-called New Philosophers in 1977, "The Diversionists" traces French intellectual fads of the postwar era. Here Castoriadis shows how Sartre, the structuralists, the poststructuralists, and then the New Philosophers not only avoided all the relevant issues, but endeavored to conceal them from public view. As far as the last group is concerned, should we say that the author who adapted the failed Czech reform slogan, "Socialism with a Human Face," to entitle his book *Barbarism with a Human Face* plagiarized the ideas of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* while diverting their revolutionary potential? Personalities, especially media personalities, are unimportant, however, and libel law is constantly changing. Let us note, instead, the social context: French youths are not unfamiliar with the practice, often tolerated by their elders, of copying off someone else's paper. As far as another subscriber to "the French ideology" is concerned, Castoriadis offers these priceless lines: "Foucault places omniscience and omnipotence not in individuals but in this mysterious entity called 'power' – or 'powers,' or 'networks of power.' Therefore, for Foucault, in history there is an impersonal instance of absolute rationality. Hegel transcended? Give us a break!" Castoriadis can demolish in a few words the "academicoleftese" (his coinage) that the French culture industry, and its American subsidiaries, have been churning out for decades.

"The Evolution of the French Communist Party" and "Socialism and Autonomous Society" were written as the PCF was "abandoning" the dictatorship of the proletariat. Castoriadis, too, but in a principled way, puts to rest this "discovery" of Marx's. Lest it be said, however, that this belated criticism retroactively confirms an unbroken Marxian legacy, let us recall what Castoriadis said in 1952,[38] when he still advocated such a dictatorship:

> As long as the basis for class domination was private ownership of the means of production, one could give a constitutional form to the "legality"

> of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by depriving of their political rights those who lived directly on the labor of another, and outlaw parties that advocated the restoration of such ownership. The withering away of private ownership in present-day society, the crystallization of the bureaucracy as exploiting class removes in large part the importance of these formal criteria. The reactionary currents against which the dictatorship of the proletariat will have to struggle, at least the most dangerous among them, will not be the bourgeois restorationist currents, but bureaucratic currents.

In light of Communism's recent collapse, the contemporary interest of the article on the now-shrunken PCF is in Castoriadis's conclusion: the totalitarian temptation cannot conveniently be assigned to a bygone historical era but rather is an ever-present danger—so long, at least, as capital concentration, bureaucratization, and nationalism remain key processes at work worldwide.[39] The final chapter in this last volume of Castoriadis's political and social writings concludes, however, that socialism can no longer be our goal—and thus the socialism/barbarism alternative can no longer, in its original Castoriadian formulation, express our basic outlook.[40] Combining his philosophical elucidation of the project of autonomy with a historical perspective on workers' struggles, women's and youths' challenges to age-old institutions, and the emancipatory movement's legacy, Castoriadis opens a new perspective, and proposes a new goal: autonomous society, a society in which the assertive free development of the critical individual living in equality with others is the condition for the fostering of societal autonomy, and the political problem of this emerging autonomous society is precisely the fostering of autonomous individuals in a setting where the question of *justice* can always be raised and acted on by these individuals and by society itself whenever they or it feel the need or desire to do so. The mythical structures supporting the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat had denied a place to the question of justice; and the mere objective of socialism, especially in its "scientific" form, not only masked the improvisatory role of individual initiative but blocked the emergence of a true individualism.[41]

In concluding, I wish to note some of what is missing from this volume as regards the project of an autonomous society.[42] The idea of a "cobirth" of philosophy and politics, central to Castoriadis's post-1979 work on ancient Greece and on modern emancipatory movements,[43] is largely absent here;[44] without this elucidation of the ever-tenuous historical connection between thought and action, one would remain in the practical antinomy Castoriadis himself faced when he decided maintenance of the group and journal was incompatible with pursuit of his philosophical work.[45] And how, we may ask, are we to articulate in today's emerging world society the necessity for wage equality when affluent nations are unwilling to alter fundamentally their economic situation and poorer nations are desirous only of attaining to the former's economic status—which would greatly hasten the ecological destruction already well under way?[46] Most weighty of all, what are we to make of Castoriadis's recent admissions that the imaginary signification of autonomy has been almost completely eclipsed by that of the unlimited expansion of "rational" mastery and that contemporary society produces only "the greedy, the frustrated, and the

conformist"?[47] Even if he concedes that the project of autonomy is not totally finished, who now will carry it forward?

I share with Castoriadis the conviction that such questions do not admit of "purely theoretical" answers. His hunch is that—at a time when some are proclaiming an end to meaningful history, an end to inquisitive philosophy, an end to revolutionary politics[48]—it is in bringing out, for all to see, the very difficulty of these questions that we can help people to confront them and help ourselves to articulate provisional responses. Of particular import is the emergence of a *world society*, a theme Castoriadis introduced in passing in *RR*, but which still lacks development. Tribalism, racialism, nationalism, sure dead ends for democracy, are again on the rise; international social and economic consolidations tend both to foster and to feed on these tendencies. Falling back on one's identity, community, and heritage only encourages others to do so; the watery "internationalism" of the United Nations and nondemocratic economic bloc mergers neither respond to nor bypass this problem. Even what Castoriadis calls the Greco-Western heritage, essential as it still is to the emergence of democratic politics and philosophy, leaves some dissatisfied and others feeling excluded. How are we to encourage its continuation and to open others to it when the West, as Castoriadis has said, knows only how to export Madonna videos and machine guns, not habeas corpus and the emancipatory project? Can there be a self-alteration of this heritage—which seems to have reached an impasse in its struggle against capitalism, technoscience,[49] and the unlimited expansion of "rational" mastery—in tandem with the emergence of new elements from non-Western societies, whereby the otherness on both sides would be neither violently effaced nor uncritically embraced? Should we not look for, and commence through experimentation with others, new cross-cultural experiences, challenging along the way a resigned withdrawal into separate communities as well as the mindless unification, standardization, and ultimate destruction of our planet? In such experiments, the other would not be taken merely as a "representative" of another community but as a potentially autonomous individual member of an eventual world society whose experience is as valid as a point of encounter, departure, and challenge as that of any other person's experience. Might this, perhaps, be the path we should begin hewing toward an as-yet nonexistent instauration of a true world society, whose autonomous articulation would be the very opposite of today's commercially and ideologically driven slogans of "multiculturalism" or "world culture" (America's version of the French "philosophy of difference"), as well as the negation of the empty convictions of "pluralist" conformity? We ask these questions, and project this new practice, even if, to paraphrase Castoriadis, we do not yet see its collective manifestations, or how it could lead to creatively meaningful new activities.[50] Let us leave behind—or, rather, let us *look* behind—the consolations of religion, the comforts of a native land, the confidence in instituted Rationality, History, Science, Progress. We shall glimpse, perhaps, the bottomless chasm whence springs the inexhaustible variety of human creation. Bringing with us all we have learned and all we have experienced, let us proceed together, into the breach, into the abyss, into the world.[51]

August-December 1991

Notes

1. For an overview of Castoriadis's work and of the present series, see his 1972 "General Introduction" to the Editions 10/18 series (translated in *PSW 1*, pp. 3–36), as well as my forewords to *PSW 1* (pp. vii-xxiii) and *PSW 2* (pp. vii-ix). I have since written an introductory summary of Castoriadis's entire oeuvre for the "Castoriadis" entry in *Social Theory: A Guide to Central Thinkers*, ed. Peter Beilharz (North Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1992).

2. See "Socialism or Barbarism," in *PSW 1*, pp. 88–106.

3. See "The Proletarian Revolution against the Bureaucracy," in *PSW 2*.

4. See "On the Content of Socialism, II," in *PSW 2*.

5. *Zeta Magazine*, 2:1 (January 1989), p. 77.

6. "Author's Introduction to the 1974 English Edition," in *PSW 2*, p. 327.

7. Boggs is not the only critic to make such claims. I have responded to Martin Jay's review, "Unorthodox Marxist" (*Dissent*, Summer 1990, pp. 400–402), in "Understanding Castoriadis" (*Dissent*, Summer 1991, p. 446). I concluded my reply thus: "The tendency to reduce what one does not understand to what one thinks one already knows is indicative of the sorry state of creative emancipatory thought today."

8. As an economic system—or rather, as a system that makes an absolute priority of economics—it would not be unreasonable to expect to find capitalism's basic expressions in the economic sphere. In his first criticism of Marxism to go beyond this sphere, however, Castoriadis had already argued that human beings' "cultural" and "sexual functions" are *just as important* as the economic one (see "On the Content of Socialism, I" [1955], in *PSW 1*, pp. 305–8).

9. Edgar Morin ("Un Aristote en chaleur") and Pierre Vidal-Naquet ("Castoriadis et 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' ") have published their reminiscences of Castoriadis and of CRESP in a special issue of the *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 86 (December 1989); this same volume of Castoriadis criticism, edited by Giovanni Busino, was simultaneously published by Droz (Geneva) as *Autonomie et autotransformation de la société. La philosophie militante de Cornelius Castoriadis*. Lefort discusses the Cercle Saint-Just in "Entretien avec C. Lefort," his April 19, 1975, interview with *Anti-Mythes*, 14 (November 1975), pp. 21–22. The English translation, "An Interview with Claude Lefort" (trans. Dorothy Gehrke and Brian Singer, in *Telos*, 30 [Winter 1976–77]), omits this section.

10. Cf. the July 12, 1986, *Le Monde* interview (p. 15), "Castoriadis, un déçu du gauche-droit" (not his choice of title). In response to a question, he replies, "I am not in the minority, I am alone, which does not mean isolated. I was alone, we were alone also during the entire period of Socialisme ou Barbarie; what happened afterward has shown that we were not isolated."

11. That is, the year after those who had contested the very idea of a revolutionary political organization (Henri Simon, Claude Lefort) left the group to form Informations et Liaisons Ouvrières (ILO, later Simon's ICO [Informations et Correspondance Ouvrières], which limited itself to publishing workers' news and letters. Former S. ou B. member Alain Guillerm tells me that the in joke among S. ou B. members concerning ICO was that the latter group worried that even stapling together copies of workers' letters might constitute a bureaucratic act. For Castoriadis's own account of the 1958 split, see "Proletariat and Organization, I," *PSW 2*, including note (a), p. 222.

12. *MCR*, in *PSW 2*, p. 305. The oppression of minorities, and minorities' novel responses to their oppression, especially in the United States, were topics of interest, especially after the Greensboro lunch-counter sit-ins (cf. *S. ou B.*, 31 [December 1960], pp. 101–4).

13. "An Interview with Claude Lefort," p. 177.

14. Paul Anderson in effect summarizes in advance the two main points of my foreword for this third volume in the conclusion to his review of the first two: Castoriadis's "emphasis on the centrality of autonomous self-activity to any emancipatory project is as relevant as ever," and "You can't understand French postmodernism unless you read Castoriadis" ("Too Marxist to Be Marxist," in *Tribune*, December 23–30, 1988). On the latter point, he adds in disgust at postmodernism, "What a bloody world."

15. Because of the delay in *MCR*'s appearance, the Belgian strikes occurred during the publication of this three-part text. Castoriadis mentions the Belgian strikes in *MCR III* (*PSW 2*, pp. 294–95), emphasizing the *festive* nature of the strikes, a theme to which he will return in "The Anticipated Revolution." Here we see—especially in footnote 69, where he contrasts socialization "in a movie hall and in

a workers' council"—a confluence of concerns between Castoriadis and the Situationists, some of whom belonged to S. ou B. for a short period before breaking off from the group and denouncing it. Former S. ou B. member Alain Guillerm has provided me with "Le Capitalisme: société sans culture. Préliminaires pour une définition de l'unité du programme révolutionnaire," *Notes Critiques*, 3 (1962), pp. 1–5, written jointly by Internationale Situationniste (IS) member Guy Debord and S. ou B. member P. Canjuers (Daniel Blanchard). This text attempted to define a common revolutionary program for IS and S. ou B. as a preliminary step toward a fusion of the two groups.

16. In May 1961, a joint programmatic statement entitled, appropriately enough, "Socialism or Barbarism" resulted from a "conference of revolutionary socialists . . . held in Paris, grouping representatives of 'Pouvoir Ouvrier' (France [i.e., S. ou B.]), 'Unità Proletaria' (Italy), 'Socialism Reaffirmed' (Great Britain [later 'Solidarity']), and 'Pouvoir Ouvrier Belge' (Belgium)." Solidarity printed the English version; it is still available in reprinted form as *Solidarity Pamphlet*, 11 (May 1969). As the 1969 introduction states, "It is difficult to realise that ten years ago terms like 'privatisation', 'depoliticisation', the 'consumer society'—or that concepts like the 'traditional organisations', 'self-activity' and 'self-management'—were used only by infinitesimal minorities."

17. See "Wildcat Strikes in the American Automobile Industry" (January 1956), in *PSW 2*.

18. Based not on its date of publication (January 1964) but rather on its date of composition (March 1963), we have placed *RR* as the third chapter in this volume.

19. See "On the Content of Socialism, I," *PSW 1*, for the equal emphasis Castoriadis places on humans' "economic," "sexual," and "cultural functions."

20. "Castoriadis et 'Socialisme ou Barbarie,' " pp. 24–25. *S. ou B.* translated a Solidarity brochure about the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, which had, Solidarity member Ken Weller recalls, a significant influence on the development of the student movement in Britain in the 1960s. Cf. "La Rébellion des étudiants (la bataille de l'Université de Berkeley)," *S. ou B.*, 39 (March 1965), pp. 67–74, which was followed by a translation of Hal Draper's pamphlet, "The Mind of Clark Kerr" (pp. 75–78).

21. See "Modern Science and Philosophical Interrogation" (1973) in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*, trans. Martin H. Ryle and Kate Soper (Brighton: Harvester, 1984); "Portée ontologique de l'histoire de la science" (1985), in *Domaines de l'homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); and "Dead End?" (1987), trans. David Ames Curtis, in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (*PPA*), ed. David Ames Curtis (New York: Oxford, 1991). Regarding *PPA*, its subtitle, "Essays in Political Philosophy," is an unauthorized and unfortunate addition.

22. See "La Destruction des significations et la ruine du langage" and "La Laideur et la haine affirmative du beau," in *Devant la guerre. Les Réalités*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1981), pp. 257–68, and "The Crisis of Culture and the State" (1987), in *PPA*.

23. The first part was translated for *PSW 2*.

24. This theme was developed further by Solidarity member Maurice Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, 1917 to 1921: The State and Counter-Revolution* (London: Solidarity, 1970; Detroit: Black and Red, 1975).

25. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, and Oxford, England: Polity, 1987). A list correlating *IIS* endnote citations of *S. ou B.* and 10/18 texts with articles now in the *PSW* series is available from David Ames Curtis (27 rue Froidevaux, Paris, France 75014).

26. In "The Movements of the Sixties," trans. Francis Schiavone, ed. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 18/19 (1987), p. 24. A later critique of Althusser, "De la langue de bois à la langue de caoutchouc" (1978), appears in *CS*, pp. 295–314.

27. On the shop stewards' movement, see *MCR*, in *PSW 2*, pp. 291–92.

28. One indication of Castoriadis's disappointed expectations for an improvisatory revolutionary practice is his response a few years ago when I replied to the question he asks me each time I return from the States: What, if any, new signs of activity? I told him how the gay community had tied up Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell's toll-free telephone pledge line, and thus cut off his source of income, simply by calling in en masse. Castoriadis replied, "That is the sort of thing we wanted to encourage in France in the sixties, but no one here did it."

29. In my foreword to *PSW 1*, p. viii.

30. According to a filmed interview with Castoriadis's daughter, Sparta, concerning her participation in the May '68 events.

31. Cf. "The Movements of the Sixties," p. 23.

32. The distinction is Brian Singer's; see 1979a and 1980, Appendix F, in *PSW 1*.

33. For a recent defense of "socialist" wage inequality, see, in the Summer 1991 issue of *Dissent*, David Miller's "A Vision of Market Socialism"–a self-delusory vision we cannot even begin to criticize, so full of contradictory ideas is this "model" offering "lessons" from the "mistakes" of the Yugoslavians, of Eastern European "reformers," and of others who "attempted" market socialism. (No mention of Castoriadis's vision of market socialism, *CS II*, is made.) Along with his acceptance of a role for the State (it will be benign) and of a separate bureaucracy (it is necessary, and in relation to democracy there will be trade-offs), we read this gem: in a "command economy" like the (former) Soviet Union's, "*where wages have long been fixed by bargaining [sic!] with central authority*, the idea of earnings varying according to market success is unfamiliar and hard to take" (p. 414, emphasis added).

34. A point reiterated in "For a New Orientation."

35. Another instance of this strategy was Castoriadis's 1974 "Discussion avec des militants du PSU," (now in *CS*). Why, asked Castoriadis, do the Parti Socialiste Unifié, the Socialists, the Communists, and the trade-union federations advocate "*autogestion*" for society but not for their own internal operations? We may comprehend this strategy ("the only way to block cooptation is to pose the most embarrassing questions" [p. 273]) as neither cynical nor delusory when we recall the relativization of the reform/revolution dichotomy Castoriadis said was a key feature of the May '68 rebellion. We must also recognize that, while not backfiring, neither did this strategy succeed.

36. In his review of *PSW 1* and *2* (see note 7, above), Martin Jay is the latest to repeat this canard about societal self-transparency–citing, as an example of this supposed illusion on Castoriadis's part, the very text (*MRT*) in which Castoriadis's criticism of transparency first appeared.

37. See again Jay's review, cited in note 7, as well as his "Force Fields," in *Salmagundi*, 88/89 (Fall 1990/Winter 1991), pp. 64–69, where he repeats his ideas about the impetus behind workers' councils being a "redemptive utopia," about the happy return of a "civil society" that does not challenge the State, and about how the "Eastern European revolutions of 1989–90" prove that workers' councils are a thing of the past. But what happens to the civil societarians' rhetoric about a "*self*-limiting revolution" when this Frankfurt School disciple not only lends support to the poststructuralists' (incoherent) challenge to a "coherent self" (pp. 68–69) but also speaks about a (more than problematic) "willing [*sic*] embrace of a measure of heteronomy" (p. 68) on the part of these "revolutions"?

38. "Sur le programme socialiste," *S. ou B.*, 10 (July 1952), p. 7; reprinted in *CS*, p. 61.

39. Three years later, in *Devant la guerre*, Castoriadis himself abandoned use of the word "totalitarianism" to describe the Russian regime and coined the term "stratocracy" to comprehend the preponderant role of military expansionism during the Brezhnev era. This change did not mean, however, that totalitarianism had become "historically impossible" in Russia or elsewhere.

40. I have discussed this theme in "Socialism or Barbarism: The Alternative Presented in the Work of Cornelius Castoriadis," in *Autonomie et autotransformation*, pp. 293–322.

41. Not to be confused with the "individualism," often indistinguishable from conformity, treated in recent French social thought, which Castoriadis criticizes in the final chapters of the present volume. His general position is that it is the psyche, not the individual, that is the term to be opposed to society. Similarly, it is hard to take seriously the recent choice made by some American philosophers and social theorists in favor of "community" over "individualism."

42. I thank Mikko Keinänen, Stephen Hastings-King, Clara Gibson Maxwell, Stéphane Barbery, and Cornelius Castoriadis for their helpful suggestions concerning this foreword.

43. See "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy" and "The Nature and Value of Equality" in *PPA*.

44. Except for a brief reference in 1973 that differs markedly from his later views (see note 21 of "The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement)" and a few other brief mentions.

45. It was, however, Castoriadis himself who, in "The Anticipated Revolution," provided a perspective for challenging the real and apparent conflicts between thought and action: "If the socialist revolution," as he then called it, "is to advance, it will not be by 'making a synthesis' of these antinomies, or by 'overcoming' them. It will be by destroying the very ground from which they inevitably arise."

46. Castoriadis argues, "The poor countries' exit from a life of misery could occur only if the rich part of humanity accepts a *diligens pater familias* management of the resources of the planet, a radical

check on technology and production, a *frugal* life" ("Does the Idea of Revolution Still Make Sense?", trans. David Ames Curtis, in *Thesis Eleven*, 26 [1990], p. 138 [corrected translation]). On the need to end the reign of economics, see "Value, Equality, Justice, Politics: From Marx to Aristotle and from Aristotle to Ourselves," in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth.*

47. Castoriadis adds, "Capitalism developing while forced to face a continuous struggle against the *status quo*, on the shop floor as well as in the sphere of ideas or of art, and capitalism expanding without any effective internal opposition, are two different social-historical animals" ("L'Epoque du conformisme généralisé," in *Le Monde morcelé* [Paris: Seuil, 1990], p. 23; I quote the original English-language typescript copy of this 1989 Boston University lecture, "The Era of Generalized Conformism," which will soon appear in *Thesis Eleven*, 31 [1992]).

48. See "Intellectuals and History" and "The 'End of Philosophy'?" in *PPA*, and "Does the Idea of Revolution Still Make Sense?"

49. See "Dead End?", in *PPA*.

50. My preference would be to see popular movements of contestation stretching across contested community or national boundaries that themselves contest the ideological, nationalistic, and/or religious bases to such conflicts, while posing alternatives thereto. The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (which was created by a Russian doctor and an American doctor and which refused to "take a position on specific policies of any government") and the attempt at "understanding" between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, both of which have been awarded Nobel Peace Prizes, are not the type of cross-community experiments I have in mind. Herodotus has already remarked that "everyone without exception believes his own native customs, and the religion he was brought up in, to be the best" (*The Histories*, III:38); there is nothing less "natural" or likely, but also, however, nothing more necessary for the emergence of a just world society than democracy, philosophy, and a secularization of society and politics—of course, not at gunpoint. Having outgrown the city-state and the nation, can humanity, via the emancipatory project, also outgrow its reliance on a determinate "people"? That is, can it create a new (world) society, living in autonomy, made up of the people who participate in this creation? A different perspective on these questions, which emphasizes the creation of the conditions for *each community* to make a *choice* as to its destiny, appears in an article written by Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Philosophical Interrogation and Creation of Democracy: Iran Confronts Modern Destiny," trans. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, forthcoming.

51. To return to the problematic once named "socialism or barbarism" and to emphasize that barbarism ever lurks along our uncertain path toward an autonomous society, even in our own steps, we quote Castoriadis one last time: "More than ever, perhaps, . . . today . . . [i]f something should appear in the present year, it should create in us, initially and until there is proof to the contrary, the strong presumption that it incarnates stupidity, ugliness, maleficence, and vulgarity" ("Intellectuals and History," in *PPA*, p. 11). Those who have read Castoriadis will recognize that this is not a call for inaction.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Volumes Written by Cornelius Castoriadis

CL	*Les Carrefours du labyrinthe* (Seuil, 1978). *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (MIT Press and Harvester Press, 1984).
CMR 1	*Capitalisme moderne et révolution, 1: L'Impérialisme et la guerre* (10/18, 1979).
CMR 2	*Capitalisme moderne et révolution, 2: Le Mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne* (10/18, 1979).
CS	*Le Contenu du socialisme* (10/18, 1979).
DH	*Domaines de l'homme* (Seuil, 1986).
EMO 1	*L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier, 1: Comment lutter* (10/18, 1974).
EMO 2	*L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier, 2: Prolétariat et organisation* (10/18, 1974).
IIS	*L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (Seuil, 1975). *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (MIT Press and Polity Press, 1987).
MM	*Le Monde morcelé* (Seuil, 1990).
PPA	*Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (Oxford University Press, 1991).
PSW 1	*Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 1. 1946–1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

PSW 2	*Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 2. 1955–1960: From the Workers' Struggle against Bureaucracy to Revolution in the Age of Modern Capitalism* (University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
PSW 3	*Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 3. 1961–1979: Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society* (University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
SB 1	*La Société bureaucratique, 1: Les Rapports de production en Russie* (10/18, 1973). 2nd ed. in one vol. (Christian Bourgois, 1990).
SB 2	*La Société bureaucratique, 2: La Révolution contre la bureaucratie* (10/18, 1973). 2nd ed. in one vol. (Christian Bourgois, 1990).
SF	*La Société française* (10/18, 1979).

Abbreviations for Articles Written by Cornelius Castoriadis

CFP	"La Concentration des forces productives," unpublished (March 1948); *SB 1*, pp. 101–13. "The Concentration of the Forces of Production," *PSW 1*, pp. 67–75.
CS I-III	"Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 17, 22, and 23 (July 1955, July 1957, and January 1958); reprinted in *CS*, pp. 67–102 and 103–221, and *EMO 2*, pp. 9–88. "On the Content of Socialism, I" *PSW 1*, pp. 290–309, and "II" and "III," *PSW 2*, pp. 90–154 and 155–92.
DC I, II	"Sur la dynamique du capitalisme," *S. ou B.*, 12 and 13 (August 1953 and January 1954).
HMO/HWM	"La Question de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier" (1973), *EMO 1*, pp. 11–120. "The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement," *PSW 3*.
IG/GI	"Introduction générale," *SB 1*, pp. 11–61. "General Introduction," *PSW 1*, pp. 3–36.
MRCM/MCR I-III	"Le Mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne," *S. ou B.*, 31, 32, and 33 (December 1960, April and December 1961); reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 47–258. "Modern Capitalism and Revolution," *PSW 2*, pp. 226–315.
MTR/MRT I-V	"Marxisme et théorie révolutionnaire," *S. ou B.*, 36–40 (April 1964-June 1965); reprinted in *IIS*, pp. 13–230. "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory," *IIS*, pp. 9–164.

PhCP	"Phénoménologie de la conscience prolétarienne," unpublished (March 1948); *SB 1*, pp. 115–30.
PO I, II	"Prolétariat et organisation," *S. ou B.*, 27 and 28 (April and July 1959); reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 123–87 and 189–248. "Proletariat and Organization, I," *PSW 2*, pp. 193–222 (*PO II* not included in this series; see Appendix C in *PSW 1*).
RIB/RBI	"Le Rôle de l'idéologie bolchevique dans la naissance de la bureaucratie," *S. ou B.*, 35 (January 1964); reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 385–416. "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy," *PSW 3*.
RPB/PRAB	"La Révolution prolétarienne contre la bureaucratie," *S. ou B.*, 20 (December 1956); reprinted in *SB 2*, pp. 267–337. "The Proletarian Revolution against the Bureaucracy," *PSW 2*, pp. 57–89.
RPR	"Les Rapports de production en Russie," *S. ou B.*, 2 (May 1949); reprinted in *SB 1*, pp. 205–81. "The Relations of Production in Russia," *PSW 1*, pp. 107–57.
RR	"Recommencer la révolution," *S. ou B.*, 35 (January 1964); reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 307–65. "Recommencing the Revolution," *PSW 3*.
SB	"Socialisme ou Barbarie," *S. ou B.*, 1 (March 1949); reprinted in *SB 1*, pp. 139–83. "Socialism or Barbarism," *PSW 1*, pp. 76–106.
SIPP	"La Situation de l'impérialisme et perspectives du prolétariat," *S. ou B.*, 14 (April 1954); reprinted in *CMR 1*, pp. 379–440. "The Situation of Imperialism and Proletarian Perspectives," *PSW 1*, pp. 256–89.

Abbreviations for Frequently Cited Texts

LCW	V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (various editions have been cited in notes to *PSW 1* and *PSW 2*).
LSW	V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1943).
LSWONE	V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works. One-Volume Edition* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).
MECW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*. 40 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1974–86).
MESW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968).

A Note on the Text and Its Notes

As the author mentions in his preface to volume 1, the texts included in the 10/18 series were reprinted verbatim, with a few exceptions, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Unannotated corrections of misprints and a few *lapsus calami*.
2. Placement, in brackets, of phrases designed to clarify the text.
3. Placement, on the title page of each article, of Publication Notes.
4. Insertion of new Author's Notes, designated in lowercase Roman letters.
5. Addition of several "Postfaces" to certain texts, elaborating the author's current views, correcting what he viewed as errors in his previously published writings, or referring the reader to more recent texts.
6. Inclusion of new texts written especially for the 10/18 series.
7. Updating of references, which continue to appear in Author's Notes designated by Arabic numerals.

In presenting this abridged translation of Castoriadis's 10/18 writings, we have adopted the author's editorial principles, making only a few minor alterations and additions:

1. Addition of new Translator/Editor's Notes, which are preceded by the designation "T/E."
2. Inclusion of additional Translator/Editor's information in existing Notes.
3. Insertion of French or English phrases directly in the text to clarify the meaning of a passage. French phrases appear italicized; all are placed in brackets.
4. Updating of references, providing the most recent English-language version wherever possible.

Cornelius Castoriadis
Political and Social Writings
Volume 3

1
The Signification of the Belgian Strikes

The wave of strikes that blanketed Belgium and astonished the world from December [1959] until January 18 [1960] is without doubt, after the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary, the most outstanding event of the workers' movement in the postwar era.[a] For the first time in many long years, the proletariat of a wealthy, industrialized country has, by the hundreds of thousands, entered into a battle that pits them directly against the capitalist government. As always in these cases, the working class immediately gathers round it everyone in the population who is not rotten—the immense majority. The small shopkeepers of Wallonia participate in the demonstrations; the women, even more combative than the men, beef up the picket lines; as in Budapest, the young mobilize almost unanimously against the State, and boys fifteen or seventeen years of age attack the cordons the police and the trade-union leaders set up against the demonstrators; the barriers between workers and intellectuals who line up on their side melt by the fires on the picket lines. The professional soldier standing guard on a bridge says, "I will never fire on my own kind," and the clergy declare that the workers' cause is just. In all of Wallonia, the population's extraordinary unity, the complete solidarity among those who are struggling, the abolition of distances between individuals, occupations, and age groups are so many signs of the existence of a revolutionary situation lasting thirty days.

The sign of a revolutionary situation is also to be found in the movement's origin. For many long months the government was readying the spoon to empty the ocean of capitalist confusion; for many long months the labor and political bureaucracy blabbered on, brandishing symbolic threats of one- or twenty-four-hour strikes. But

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when the Omnibus Bill came before the Parliament, the workers, no longer waiting for orders from on high, took matters into their own hands and unleashed the strike. It is among those who are most exploited that the movement has, once again, found its origin: the municipal workers. And in several cases the extension of the strike into the iron and steel sectors has been marked by violent brawls between workers and labor representatives.

And yet, even if in these events in Belgium the characteristic aspects of great proletarian movements can easily be discerned, it is important to recognize their limits, these being also the conditions for their ultimate failure. In many places, the workers began by electing rank-and-file strike committees that played a role in unleashing the strike in the first place. But as soon as the trade unions gave their go-ahead to this movement, which they could no longer oppose, they were able everywhere, and without difficulty, to impose their own strike committees, made up in fact of people hand-picked by the top brass. Nowhere, afterward, does one discern any attempts by the workers to set up *their own autonomous leadership*. Even as they were expressing their distrust of the labor and political bureaucracy, holding it up to contempt, sometimes hurling insults at it, the Belgian proletariat never succeeded in freeing itself from this bureaucracy's grasp, in asserting itself as its own leadership and as that of society, in creating any kind of an embryo of new institutions—as has been done in other circumstances by truly representative strike committees, factory committees, workers' councils, or soviets. Despite certain difficulties, the labor bureaucracy succeed in maintaining complete control over the movement.

This lack of autonomy on the part of the proletariat is to be found again when one looks at the *objectives* of the movement. The disproportionality between the breadth and the tenaciousness of the workers' struggle, on the one hand, and the ostensible goal formulated by this struggle (the withdrawal of the Omnibus Bill), on the other, is such that one would be tempted to say that the movement had no objective at all, or in any case no objective worth mentioning. That the [labor and political] bureaucracy was neither able nor willing to give the movement other goals is too easily understood; what could they be? For the bureaucracy, this immense popular struggle was only an immense cause for embarrassment. For, given the proportions it had taken on, it was *unusable*. At most, it could have been used to force the formation of a government with the participation of the Socialists; it quickly became clear, however, that the bourgeoisie did not want that at any price. To oblige it to accept this goal, the bureaucracy would have had to radicalize the struggle, seek out street battles, attack the state apparatus—in brief, do what a reformist bureaucracy always has been organically incapable of doing. From the beginning of the struggle to the end, the bureaucracy was caught in this insurmountable contradiction. To radicalize the movement would have meant turning against the state apparatus that it had been directing just yesterday, that it is preparing to direct again tomorrow, and that, in any case, it still takes part in today. To oppose laboring people head on would have meant cutting itself off once and for all from the workers, demolishing the foundation for its own existence, without much chance of mastering the situation. Whence its exclusively dilatory tactics, its waiting for the strike to wear itself down, its refusal to order a general strike, its rejection of the march on Brussels, its threat to abandon even the maintenance of the blast furnaces, a

threat intended to calm the strikers but never carried out. For the same reasons, the bureaucracy was just as incapable of assigning the movement any real objective whatsoever.

One might be tempted to say that the movement did not have an objective—but that would be wrong. Six hundred thousand wage earners on strike, more than a million people if one counts all those who participated in the movement, did not struggle for thirty days, they did not accept enormous hardships and sacrifices, without *wanting* something other and more important than the withdrawal of a budgetary reform that, on the whole, is more benign than the measures taken by de Gaulle and [French finance minister Antoine] Pinay in December 1958. What the workers in their struggle wanted shone through in the choice they made of their enemies and of the buildings they attacked, in the slogans that arose from the crowds ("Let the bankers pay"), and in those slogans they took up most readily ("Factories to the workers"). The workers wanted to struggle against the capitalist regime. They were not able, however, to formulate this will in an explicit manner, nor were they able to give it the form of determinate objectives, of a program in the largest sense of this term. The Belgian proletariat was not able to provide itself with a *positive* perspective, and for this reason even the "negative," purely defensive side of its struggle was not able to lead to a successful outcome.

We thus find ourselves faced with a striking contradiction between the combativity of the working class, its solidarity, its awareness of its opposition as a class to the capitalist class and to the capitalist State, its distrust of the bureaucracy, on the one hand; and, on the other, the at-present insurmountable difficulty it encounters as it tries to free itself from this bureaucracy's grasp, to take on in a positive way the direction of its own affairs, to create its own institutions, to formulate explicitly its own objectives. What is the origin of this contradiction, and how can it be overcome?

Let us say straight off that the Belgian strikes express in a typical fashion the situation of the proletariat in a modern capitalist society. First of all, these strikes relegate to their rightful place—the Museum of Theoretical Monstrosities—those views that proclaim the disappearance of the proletariat, the end of class struggle, and so forth. In a highly industrialized country, with a standard of living higher than the European average, the proletariat fought as a class against the capitalists; and it fought *against* the regime, not for its modernization. These strikes show as well the decrepitude of a number of conservative, pseudo-Marxist schemata. It is not the "inexorable mechanisms of the capitalist economy," but rather Eyskens's[1] attempt to eliminate confusion from a sector of the capitalist economy that has unleashed these strikes and has almost led to the overthrow of the Belgian bourgeoisie.

What, however, is particularly noticeable is that as soon as one is obliged to pass to the level of *political* action—the level at which the whole of society is intended—the proletariat encounters difficulties that for the moment are insurmountable. The hold of the bureaucracy, the habit of turning over the management of its affairs to "responsible officials," the *unlearning* of the affairs of society have reached the point where, in a country with a long tradition of working-class struggles, the idea that a network of strike committees independent of the unions and responsible to the workers would have to be set up forthwith does not dawn on anyone, not even

among the most left-wing of militants; the idea that this enormous struggle could be the point of departure for a battle for the socialist transformation of society is still less evident.

It would be completely superficial to chalk this phenomenon up to local, and hence "accidental," conditions. In all modern countries, the same difficulty is virtually present as result of a half century of bureaucratization of the labor movement and of society in general.

How can this situation be overcome? The Belgian working class—and with it, the most conscious members of the European proletariat—have just undergone a crucial experience of the bureaucracy, and it is here undoubtedly that we have the *first* condition for a change in the contemporary working-class attitude toward the overall problem of society.

By itself alone, however, this experience may remain totally insufficient—and may lead simply to demoralization, which never has taught anyone anything—if an effort is not made, *with* the Belgian workers and *for* them, to draw lessons from it, to formulate these lessons clearly, to outline a *positive* perspective on the struggle for the transformation of society. This effort can be accomplished only by a revolutionary organization, an organization that aims not at substituting itself for the class, nor at directing it, but at being one of the instruments the latter uses for its liberation. Already during the strikes such an organization, had it existed, would have been able to play a role of capital importance: ideas such as the election of strike committees and their federation on a national level, objectives with a socialist character could have been presented to the working class and defended before it, and could have radically changed the pace and the evolution of these struggles.

We are pleased to be able to announce today that some Belgian comrades, with the cooperation of our organization Pouvoir Ouvrier in France, have begun working since these events took place on the constitution of a revolutionary organization in Belgium.

Notes

1. T/E: Gaston Eyskens (b. 1905) served his second of three terms as Belgian premier from 1958 until March 1961.

a) *S. ou B.*, 32 (April 1961), was for the most part devoted to a description and analysis of the Belgian strikes, based primarily on eyewitness accounts and reports from participants (in Brussels, Charleroi, Mons, Liège, Louvière, etc.).

2
For a New Orientation

Introduction

The group has arrived at a decisive turning point in its history.

This turning point has been imposed upon it both by external events and by its own internal situation.

External events: with the end of the Algerian War, we can no longer continue to avoid answering the following question: In a modern capitalist country, in what does revolutionary activity consist?

Internal situation: the great majority of the comrades, in fact nearly all of them, clearly feel that the extreme empiricism and the refusal to respond, as far as we are capable, to basic questions that have characterized for the past two years the conduct and the existence of the group cannot go on any longer without leading to a certain split.

The combination of these two factors today oblige the group to regain a hold upon itself. During the last two years the Algerian War served in fact as a substitute for a search toward a solution of the genuine political problems facing us (in the most profound sense of our orientation). This statement does not constitute a criticism of this activity as such, but rather a criticism of the fact that it constituted practically the *sole* activity of the group and the central theme of its propaganda. That was wrong. But in any case, it is now impossible. It no longer can be said (even if previously this was said only unconsciously): "In any event, we ought to do everything

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"Pour une nouvelle orientation," circulated within the S. ou B. group. Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 263–305.

Introduction, circulated within the S. ou B. group (October 1962). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 263–67.

we can against the Algerian War, and, as we cannot do everything at once, the rest will have to wait." (Among a few comrades this idea was combined with the hope that the consequences of the war, in the form of a crisis of the Gaullist regime, for example, would bring us back to known, "classical" situations, thus freeing us from having to deal with the new problems.) Now we are obliged, under penalty of death, to respond to these problems: What can revolutionaries say and what can they do in a capitalist country where the regime has achieved stability and does not encounter any difficulties in the short term, where the population is not politically active, where (as is the case in France in particular) even industrial actions occur very rarely and remain very limited in scope?

To these aspects of the overall situation, we must add another, concerning our international relations:

a group has been set up in England—the one that today publishes *Solidarity*—on the basis of our ideas, and in particular on that part of our ideas that has been the most controversial within the French group. This group has been developing over the past two years and operates in many respects in an exemplary fashion;

a scission has taken place in the United States within the *Correspondence* group between those who place fidelity to traditional Marxism above all else (Johnson [C. L. R. James]) and those who want to redefine their revolutionary ideas and their revolutionary practice in terms of the society in which we live (Ria Stone [Grace (Lee) Boggs]);

we have established contacts with a Japanese revolutionary organization (the Revolutionary Communist League–Central Committee), which, being generally very close to our ideas, is the first organization based on such ideas that possesses real numerical strength and a preponderant influence on a mass movement (the Zengakuren).

We therefore have ceased to be alone on the international level; our connections no longer are just contacts with individuals or with very small groups. This can be for us an immense positive contribution, but it also sets before us new and considerable tasks and responsibilities.

Faced with this situation, a certain number of us comrades from the Paris area have met and decided to present to the group a set of propositions aimed at helping it to extricate itself from its present state and at allowing it to face up to the tasks before it, and first of all to *define* these tasks. The common basis upon which we have come together is our agreement with the main points of the analysis, the method, and the orientation defined in Cardan's text "Modern Capitalism and Revolution"[1] (understanding that this text, like every text that does not issue from a divine revelation, is one link in the development of revolutionary theory and practice, and that it is meant to be filled out, formulated in a more precise way, and ultimately surpassed; we consider it simply as the essential link today). The reason why we have deemed it preferable to meet among ourselves and to work separately at first is related to the extreme ideological confusion in which the group has found itself over

the past two years and to the awareness of the fact that, within this context, discussions are bogging down and getting lost to no one's benefit.

We propose that the organization adopt, either in a national conference or in a general assembly of the Paris-area comrades broadened to include comrades from the provinces,

a platform for the group's ideological and political orientation;

a text on the orientation of the group's propaganda;

a text on the orientation of the group's activity;

statutes and rules for the provisional functioning of the group.[a]

Adoption of these texts ought to take place within a reasonable amount of time. The discussion that ought to precede a decision on these texts ought not to go on interminably. The problems involved have been debated in the group for years, at least a good number of them. As for the others, certainly no solution will come from a discussion in a hermetically sealed chamber by a stagnating group. A certain number of positions on key points must firmly be adopted so that our work may move forward and reach the stage of practical application, keeping our eyes and minds open all the while.

To facilitate such decisions, we will submit to the group a series of texts.[b]

[. . .]

It is our intention and our hope that once this process has begun, the comrades as a whole will participate fully in the discussion and final elaboration of these texts, and that our tendency will be able to cease to exist as a particular tendency.

On the Orientation of Our Propaganda

Function and Character of Ideological Work and of Propaganda during the Present Period

1. One of the fundamental tasks of the organization is the continuous elaboration and dissemination of a revolutionary ideology. Whatever the objective conditions, whatever the problems concerning other forms of activity, there can be no hesitation on this score, no doubt can exist. Whatever else happens, what the organization does in this domain, if it does it well—and it can do it well—will remain; and if circumstances have forced it to traverse a barren period, ideological work [*élaboration*] and propaganda (and not some vain activism that, receiving no response from society, could only serve to demoralize the organization and lead to its disintegration) are what would allow the organization to hold itself together during this period as well as what would furnish it with the necessary bases for embarking upon the next stage.

There is an infinitely more imperative need for this work today than in the past. There will be no renaissance of a revolutionary socialist movement unless an entire

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"Sur l'orientation de la propagande," text circulated within the S. ou B. group (October 1962). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 269–89.

organic set of ideas, principles, values, attitudes, and criteria are established and explicitly embraced by a large segment of the laboring population. We have to constitute, to formulate, and to propagate a vision of history and of society, of the relations among people and of the organization of their common life. Without these, people's reactions against the mystification, the alienation, and the decomposition of capitalism risk never reaching the point of articulation. We need only recall the enormous role that the Marxist (and other) movement(s) have played in this regard during the nineteenth century. Born in most cases within the proletariat and through its struggles, ideas such as the struggle of one class against another, socialism, internationalism, the very vision of the "bourgeois" as incarnation of that against which one struggles would not have played the explosive role they have played, would not have become genuine historical forces in their own right, if the Marxist movement had not worked them out [*élaborées*], formulated them in a precise way, and circulated them systematically. Without this ideology, which is much more than an ideology: without this vision of society, this proletarian *culture* that had its own values, criteria, poles, there would have been no workers' movement, but only fragmentary, sporadic explosions. And within our organization there is no need to affirm that only a revolutionary organization can do this work; it must start, of course, from elements and features that society itself produces, but these elements and features, when left to themselves, will never "spontaneously" form a coherent ideology, a pole opposing the bureaucratic-capitalist pole.

Now, the immensity of this task cannot be underestimated. Capitalist culture is disintegrating before our very eyes—but so is the old proletarian culture. What is socialism today, not for us and those near to us, a few hundred individuals in an ocean of three billion souls, but for actual workers in society today? And internationalism? What, for them, is "the [working] class"? Worse than nothing—a nothingness covered by the ruins of the previous ideology that prevents them half the time (during the other half, it is the mystification of capitalism that takes over) even from seeing, and in any case from thinking, reality clearly. As [S. ou B. member Daniel] Mothé has said, when the workers at Renault want to express their rage against the system and against the condition in which it places them, they talk about "eating steak," which really is not an issue for anyone. Rather it is that, not being able to give articulate expression to their revolt against present-day society, they continue to use previously meaningful terms [*les vieux mots clés*] that no longer have any real signification at all. Our task, the one that no one else will be able to accomplish, is to furnish new meaningful terms, new *idées-forces*, which correspond to present-day reality, enable one to clarify one's thoughts, and allow one's actions to bear fruit.

The propagation of new conceptions can come about only in tandem with continuous ideological work. The attitude that would consist in saying, "We shall elaborate our ideas first, then we shall circulate them, and finally we shall act upon them" would obviously be sterile and mechanistic. Just as false, however, is the attitude that consists in saying, "We have an adequate and well-constituted body of ideas, we just have to popularize them and carry them into action." The continuous elaboration of our ideology—which, one has the impression, is given only lip service by some of the comrades in the organization—is today, as never before, a sine qua non condition for there to be revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary activity

worthy of the name. If Marx wrote one hundred years ago, in characterizing the capitalist era, that there is "an uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions . . . all that is solid melts into thin air,"[2] while living during a period that in retrospect appears to us as one of stable relations and extremely slow developments, what must we say today? Probably that our most audacious efforts merely allow us to keep running breathlessly at a respectable distance behind a reality that is changing at hallucinating speed. Those who, faced with this situation, say, "We have only to fill in or improve upon classical Marxism" say in veiled terms, "We feel drowsy."

Until now we have set down only a few foundation stones for this ideological elaboration. And our propaganda effort for *our own* ideas has not, properly speaking, even begun. What is both most essential and newest in our positions has not yet, practically speaking, appeared in public.

2. Amid this culture that is decomposing more and more each day, in its capitalist wing as well as in its "working-class" wing, we ought to take our stand as the total negation of that which is established and as the expression of people's genuine aspirations. We therefore ought to mark a radical rupture with the ideology and values of official society, which are, in fact, shared, with only minor variations, by supposedly working-class organizations. The first, and presently most important, aspect of this rupture is with the "theory" and the "ideology" of the various "left-wing" organizations: a narrow politico-economic viewpoint expressed in an inhuman jargon. We first must smash the *framework* within which their ideology and their propaganda are placed, that of a modification in the operation of the economy brought about by a political change. The crisis of society and of culture is total, and the revolution will be total or it will not be at all.

To break with the bureaucratic ideology is, first of all, to break with the *themes* of this ideology and its corresponding propaganda. It is to broaden the subjects we are talking about so as to embrace all aspects of people's lives in society. It is, moreover, the most profound content of our ideas that makes this incumbent upon us. If the problem in modern capitalism is not that of a stagnating standard of living and unemployment, the only questions that really matter are the following: What is work? What is consumption? What ought to be people's relationships within the production process, in the family, in each locality, and so on? If socialism is not to be reduced to a few transformations in the economic system; if these very transformations are both inconceivable and void of content without *something else*, without a radical change in people's attitude toward society; if this change can occur only when people start to see that their management of society truly concerns their concrete lives—then it is this life, in its concreteness, in the infinity of its aspects, that ought to be our permanent and ongoing theme.

We next must break with what dogmatism still remains within us and with what, in our very relative attempts at perfectionism, is only negativism and a form of inhibition. There are a certain number of basic programmatic points on which we ought to be extremely firm and strict: workers' management, power to workers' councils, the absurdity of all kinds of reformism, the destruction of hierarchy, wage equality, direct democracy, the right to all information. There are a host of other points about which it is vital for us to talk, but concerning which it would be simply ridiculous

to try to set down here and now the course of humanity in the future. In the present era, all social phenomena are undergoing modifications at an accelerated pace and in interdependence. The questions we have begun to investigate, and which we ought to investigate more and more, are connected by ties both solid and subtle, blinding and obscure, to the most important aspects of social phenomena as a whole. They are immensely difficult and complex. Therefore, there can be no question of establishing "programmatic" positions on everything and anything and defending these as we defend our program. Nor is it a question of limiting ourselves to the defense of our program (the points defined above). People will not make a revolution over their wages—not today, in any case; they will not even make one for workers' management as such, and rightly so, since workers' management as such is only a tool, not an end in itself. People will make a revolution in order to make a radical change in the way they live, and this concerns the *content* of the revolution, its *ends*, and its *values*. This content, these ends, and these values will have to be sketched out already in advance in a certain fashion. This we cannot do all alone, for then we would be just a tiny group laying its personal utopias. But we can do it. We can do it, first of all, if we know how to see, to understand, to interpret, and to formulate what people are actually doing, in their work and in their lives; second, if we know how to detect, within this very culture that is in the process of decomposing, the efforts and the attempts of individuals and thinkers who are not necessarily on our side, but whose results, conclusions, and data can be used by us; finally, if we know how to welcome and accept the collaboration and the contributions of people outside the group, and to do so within the framework of a very broad ideological sense of agreement while noting, each time we call on them to speak, that these ideas are not necessarily ours and while laying out our differences when we deem it useful. If we are convinced that our ideas are true, we have no reason to fear anyone. Our outlook in this domain should be that we ought to become the animators and the guides of a vast ideological current whose general orientation is clearly and firmly established, but within which a great variety of opinions and attitudes, expressing the wealth and complexity of the revolutionary socialist movement, coexist (and can coexist). In the future, humanity will not be made up of three billion copies of a neo-Bolshevik activist—and this ought to be made manifest in our ideas, in our activities, in our attitudes.

We must break with all kinds of dogmatism relating to others—and we must also break with all kinds of dogmatism relating to ourselves. We must rid ourselves of a certain false rigor that is no more than rigidity. We must accept and encourage the efforts of those in the organization who have a fragmentary contribution to make on some point, who want to raise a problem or put into question some idea or other. This is not a matter of "asking questions" for the pleasure of asking questions, but of understanding that there is no progress in the realm of ideas, any more than in that of action, without a process of trial and error. We must understand that the expression and the formulation of an idea, even in a fragmentary, imperfect, or erroneous way, can lead to its being surpassed, whereas its suppression can lead only to political neurosis. We must reflect to the best of our ability before we speak and write, but we must also denounce a sterile censorship, understanding that we are

not, at each instant in our life, in the process of making final legislation for centuries to come.

To break with the conceptions and practice of bureaucratic organizations is also to break with traditional jargon, which has lost all meaning for people, and even has become an object of derision (cf. Mothé's articles in *S. ou B.*). We must transform our way of speaking and writing, pitilessly eliminating from our speech and from our texts insider terms and a didactic expository style. Obviously, on this point no one can provide recipes or resolve the problem by fiat in one day; only the multiplication of examples and of trial efforts will be able to yield results (some of the texts written by our English and American comrades show the way in this regard). But this need to change our language must become a preoccupation, a permanent obsession for everyone.

Finally, we must break with the traditional methods of elaboration. What we say elsewhere on the need for the reunification of culture and life, of theory and practice, of intellectuals and workers, ought not to continue to remain a Sunday sermon. We shall show below what this can signify for us at present.

3. The major axes of our work of elaboration and propaganda are as follows:

a) To analyze and to show the disintegration of people's forms of life and existence, in all domains, that have been created by capitalism and constantly destroyed by it; to analyze and to show the consequences that follow for people's lives, the waste and incoherency on the social level, the misery and the suffocation on the individual level.

b) To analyze and to show what is positive in that which is constantly emerging in reaction to and in the struggle against capitalist forms of life and against their disintegration: first, in the actual lives of people, who are obliged to create forms that allow them to survive and to try to construct a meaning for their lives—this meaning no longer being, for the first time in the history of humanity, an inherited and naively accepted meaning, but now one sought after by people in a world where nothing is certain any longer; then, in capitalist culture itself, whose best representatives feel obliged to denounce the present system and to propose positive partial solutions that very often are situated along the same perspective as ours.

Some comment on two points is necessary here.

First, in the organization or in its immediate environs, unilateral, and hence absurd, positions have been taken on these problems. Only a single side of reality was grasped, emphasized, and then erected into an absolute. On the one hand, there was Johnson [C. L. R. James], claiming that "socialist society already exists in the working-class community of the factory"; on the other hand, some comrades presented capitalist society as pure and total alienation, or contemporary culture (in general, and in its particular manifestations) as a complete nullity. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to understand that (1) if socialist society already existed, people would probably have noticed it; (2) if present-day society was only alienation, it would have collapsed, and if culture had totally caved in upon itself, we no longer would be able to do anything but emit flatulent noises. Almost everyone will agree on the above, but not everyone takes the pain to see in each case the two factors that are struggling against each other and intimately united.

Next, we should point out that it would be a poor philosophy indeed that would

be content simply to emphasize that there are two sides to everything or even that they are reciprocally dependent. Bureaucratic capitalism is constantly trying to alienate people—but the very means it employs to this end are taken up again by people and turned against it, just as people's struggle against the established system can be coopted by this system. In *S. ou B.* we have already analyzed this dialectic within the production process, but it acts in all domains. Nothing is simple and nothing is settled once and for all—which does not mean that everything is within everything else, or that everything is doubtful, but rather that one must take the trouble to reflect on each problem and at each stage. The truth is almost always concrete.

c) To sketch out what are socialist responses, whether as concerns immediate problems or the problem of transforming society. Here we must be inspired by workers' struggles, by people's attitudes and needs, and by our theoretical analyses.

4. Our sources in this work ought to be:

a) Concrete documents, bringing out the ways in which people live the crisis of society in the various aspects of their lives and the ways in which they react against it. We ought to (1) conduct interviews and make reports, obtain firsthand accounts on the questions that preoccupy us and that preoccupy people; (2) make use of documents of all sorts, including those which the bourgeois press often publishes; (3) avail ourselves of the press of sister organizations, for example of our American comrades; (4) organize discussions between comrades in our group, and between them and people from outside. In this regard, there is a striking phenomenon within the organization as it actually exists today, namely the fact that only an infinitesimal part of the experience and the interests of the comrades transpires within the formal functioning of the organization. Here we have a state of alienation, properly speaking, which is due to a censorship unconsciously exercised against everything that is not "political" and which we must overcome if we do not want to reach the point of complete sterility.

b) The exploitation of theoretical and historical material, which contemporary culture produces in abundance. There is, so to speak, nothing of importance within production today that is not of interest to us, that we could not utilize in one fashion or another—on the condition, first, that we know how to read, in the full sense of the term; on the condition, too, that we put it into perspective as concerns the revolutionary transformation of society. We shall provide concrete examples below.

c) Our own labor of reflection and research, which alone can bring about the synthesis and the unification of all this material, and which will be able to occur if this work is finally liberated from its ties to an orthodoxy that does not even dare to utter its name.

[. . .]

II. The Main Themes of Our Work and of Our Propaganda

6. Labor and its new forms.

Interviews: Renault workers: assembly-line workers at Renault; comrades from the Renault works in Le Mans; industrial draftsmen and punched-card machine operators; employees at a large telephone exchange center; saleswomen at the big

department stores; women factory workers; technicians; office workers at an industrial enterprise.

Texts: by comrades in the group who are teachers, about their work; by comrades in the group who are professors, about their work.

–Text on hierarchy (on the shop floor, in offices, the fate of the problem of responsibility in a hierarchical structure, etc.).

–Text on staff employees. Text on automation (myth and reality; technical and economic aspects, but with special emphasis on the role of the worker in automated units: reduction of labor to passive supervision, disappearance of the meaning of work and of socialization in work; automation and work in a socialist society). Text on the meaning of work (how workers live their work, what they expect of it; to what extent work has been reduced virtually to breadwinning; work as terrain of socialization, on the shop floor and in offices).

–Summary and analysis of Peter Drucker's book, *Landmarks of Tomorrow.*

7. Woman's situation and the problem of the family.

Translation of the *Correspondence* brochure, *A Woman's Place* [by Marie Brant (Selma [Weinstein] James) and Ellen Santori]; anthology and translation of the articles on the situation of woman published in *Correspondence*; summary and analysis of Margaret Mead's book *Male and Female.*

Meetings among the women comrades of the group, using the above texts and others listed below.

Text on woman's situation in contemporary society (analysis of the three fundamental changes in woman's situation: entry of women into the *wage-earning*, productive work force; collapse of the patriarchal sexual morality; woman's accession to formal equality with respect to education, political "rights," and social responsibility. Maintenance of de facto economic and social oppression; importance of the residues of patriarchal mentality and women's sexual suffering. Responsibility for children centering more and more on the woman. How women try to make something of their lives within this situation. What socialism can signify for women).

Text on the problem of the contemporary family (disappearance of the old patriarchal family, reduction of the family to the parents/children biological unit of reproduction. Contradictory movement within contemporary society toward [a] the destabilization of the family in consequence of the collapse of taboos and of the crisis in relations between the sexes; [b] a heightened sense of family in consequence of privatization. The family as economic unit and unit of consumption. The family as institution of training and of education of children. The family and the fate of the elderly. Considerations on the future of the family).

8. Children, education, youth.

Meetings among parents concerning the problems raised by youth. Interviews with young people about their parents. Interviews with "leather-jackets" [*blousons noirs*] and typical "uprooted" youths.

Summary and analysis of Bruno Bettelheim's book *Truants from Life.*

Text on contemporary youth, synthesizing the texts of Mothé on young workers and Claude on students.[c]

Texts: on the crisis of traditional images of man and of woman among contemporary youth; on children and their education in "primitive" societies, starting with

Margaret Mead's books *Coming of Age in Samoa, Growing Up in New Guinea, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*; on modern pedagogy (Makarenko, Freinet, the Reichian school in England and in Israel); on the nature and the role of the contemporary school.

Firsthand accounts: from a professor in a decolonized country; on the profession of teaching and being a professor.

9. Housing and urban life.

Interviews: with the inhabitants of Sarcelles;[3] with public-housing residents in Noisy-le-Sec; with architects.

Summary and analysis of books by Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* and *Cities in Transition*, and by [Pierre] Francastel, *Art et Technique*.

Text on housing and urban life in Russia. Theoretical text on the village and the city (town and country).

10. Consumption, leisure, culture.

Interviews on the topic of television (viewers and producers).

Texts: on contemporary American cinema; on the signification of cinema in capitalist society (as expression of this society—its action upon society).

Texts: on the various modes of consumption and the transformations of social life (relations of consumer objects and of types of consumption to the structure of contemporary social life—rationality and irrationality of these consumption patterns—consumption and privatization).

~~On the critique of consumer society.~~

On information (industrialization of information, exact role of the mass media, mechanisms of falsification and manipulation, positive functions of information even under its present-day forms, what is adequate information, information in socialist society).

Interviews: people's attitude toward contemporary technical and scientific developments.

Texts: on technical and scientific change and the masses (growing separation between the scientifico-technical world and the common man; opposing pole found in the massive dissemination of information and in people's demonstrated thirst for scientifico-technical information).

On the implications of contemporary scientific development for the future of society.

On the revolutionary signification of psychoanalysis.

On the crisis of bourgeois political economy.

On the positive tendencies found in contemporary sociology.

On cybernetics and its revolutionary implications.

On revolutionary ideology and capitalist culture.

On the crisis of values and significations in present-day society.

On the meaning of socialism.

11. Nonindustrialized countries.

Text for the liquidation and assessment of traditional positions on the "colonial question" (transformation of imperialist exploitation; assessment of the theory of the permanent revolution; the bureaucracy in the colonial revolution; the role of the peasantry; future of decolonized countries).

Interviews with African and other students in Paris.

Summary and analysis of the book by Margaret Mead et al., *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change.*

Texts: on the revolutionary signification of ethnology.

On Engels's *The Origin of the Family* . . .

On socialism and backward countries.

On Guinea.

On Cuba and Castroism.

[. . .]

III. Means of Expression

13. We deem it useless to discuss the necessity and the importance of the review, in the present period, as an instrument for circulating our ideas and as a means for educating [*formation*] the comrades within the organization.

However, a series of changes ought to be introduced in order to make the review an effective instrument and in order to increase its prospects for circulation. The first of these conditions obviously is that it appear regularly and always on time. That undoubtedly depends on a greater effort on the part of the comrades who are specifically charged with bringing it out. However, inasmuch as we do not want to be reduced to self-exhortation, we must state that its regular appearance is in particular a function of an effective process of *producing the content* of the review. That in its turn depends on a genuine collectivization of contributions, and also, to a lesser degree, on easing the procedures for acceptance of published texts. Both in order to make the production of the content easier and in order to apply the ideas stated above, and also in order to make the review really a review, we must adopt the following principles:

a) The review ought to open itself to all the domains mentioned above, and cease to be limited to theoretical texts on political economy.

b) The relative weight of strictly theoretical articles (whatever subject they may be on) ought to diminish to the benefit of "documentary" texts, reportage, etc.

c) It no longer should be a strict rule that each elaboration be "final" and "perfected," though we should note that such articles are contributions to a discussion or partial, fragmentary considerations on a topic.

d) Contributions from collaborators not belonging to the group ought to be accepted (with an indication, if need be, that we do not share this or that position).

[. . .]

14. We need a journal like *Pouvoir Ouvrier* at the present stage as a lighter and more frequently appearing tool for circulating our ideas, as a means for provoking and grasping the reactions of our public, and finally as a testing ground for the printed journal, which ought to be our long-term goal.

But if we want it to express what is essential and new in our ideas there must be a profound change in the manner in which the content of *P. O.* has been conceived until now. This content, as it has existed until now, is liable to the following criticisms:

Those themes that define our orientation the least (the war in Algeria, denunciation of the exploitation of the workers) are the ones that have been developed the most, and almost exclusively. The face that has been presented the past two years in *P. O.* is, basically, that of a "correct Trotskyist." The attempts to enlarge the themes of the journal have remained sporadic, superficial, incapable of truly altering its physiognomy.

The journal gives the impression that, at all cost, it will always run after events. Now, (1) just because we call it a journal does not make it one, for a monthly is something other than a weekly or a daily; (2) there are current events and there are current events, and just because an event makes the front page of the papers does not necessarily mean that (a) it is something that really preoccupies people, or (b) it is something we have to talk about. There are current events for governments and political organizations, current events in the sense of what genuinely preoccupies people, and current events in the sense of what preoccupies us. *Pouvoir Ouvrier* ought to be talking about current events in the second and third senses and not in the first, save in those (rare) cases where some official current event really is preoccupying people.

Pouvoir Ouvrier ought to be talking about things that really matter to *us* or about which we have something specific to say. It constantly is forgotten that one of our tasks is to *impose our obsessions on the public*, and the other is to discover the public's obsessions, which in no way coincide with the obsessions found in the daily papers. If we are really moving ahead, from the ideological point of view, these two tasks ought to be, in the final analysis, just one. For, what ought to be obsessing us is what obsesses people—and what obsesses people ought to have a universal import, whether positive or negative, if we judge by a principle that, for us, is fundamental.

This entails

a) that we must center *P. O.* essentially around the themes defined above in Part II of this text, and that the actual efforts that will be made in this direction ought also to be applied to *P. O.*;
b) that *P. O.* would have to reflect the formal or informal discussions going on between comrades in the group, and that all comrades would have to be able to express themselves in it;
c) that we must correct the excessive position into which we have now fallen—which is the opposite, as is almost always the case in the organization, of the previous excess—concerning "Giving Workers a Voice."[d] It is one thing to want to base the journal essentially on the expression of its readership, which is wrong; it is another to publish letters from readers whenever they are sent, to encourage and even provoke responses as much as possible—and especially to try, by way of interviews, to make the journal a living tie between the group and its public. One forgets that, according to the very content of our ideas, what people have to say is important in itself (which does not imply, need we state it, that one automatically accepts it as true).

[. . .]

On the Orientation of the Group's Activities

1. Before trying to define what the outside activities of the group in the coming period can and should be, it is important to dispel a certain number of misunderstandings as well as to draw out certain conclusions that follow from our analysis of contemporary society and from our conception of the revolutionary organization.

2. It must be clearly understood that in normal times a revolutionary organization essentially only *spreads ideas* (which, of course, do not have to do with Zen Buddhism, but with the need for a revolutionary transformation of society). The moments when the organization can undertake, as such, any *action* are very rare. Even during as exceptional a period as March-October 1917, the activity of the Bolshevik party in Petrograd consisted basically in the spreading of ideas: to show that there was no possible turning back, that the Cadet and Social-Democratic ministers were trying to preserve the old system, that the only solution was to be found in the seizure of power by the organs of the masses. It was not Socrates or Maria Montessori or Freud, but Lenin himself who said during this period that the essential task of the party consisted in "patiently explaining." The important distinction to be made in this regard is not that between spreading ideas and acting (for, once again, the instances in history where the organization undertakes as such any action in the strong sense of the term are marginal cases). Rather, it is the distinction that exists between the spreading of general ideas (propaganda) and the spreading of ideas concerning what is to be done and not to be done at a given moment (to organize in one fashion or another, to undertake or not a strike or a demonstration, to raise certain demands, etc.)—which is traditionally called agitation.

3. Agitation as it has traditionally been practiced obviously was organically related to the traditional conception of the role of the party and of its relations with the workers. Not only in its content, but in its methods, its style, and its ultimate purpose [*finalité*], it incarnated the attitude that, as a leadership group, it had everything to teach the masses and nothing to learn from them; for it, the main thing was that the workers be led to adopt its instructions, not that the workers themselves advance along the path of autonomy. It therefore cannot be a question for us of resuming the tradition of agitation such as it has been practiced. This does not mean that we are renouncing, or that we will ever renounce, this central task of a revolutionary organization, which consists in helping the workers to orient themselves and to organize their struggle and therefore to define, defend, and disseminate positions concerning what is to be done and not to be done. But this very well means that the manner in which this task is to be carried out needs to be defined anew; and, even before that, we must specify the conditions under which we would be in a position to fulfill this task, if we want to carry it out effectively and in a fashion that is consonant with our ideas.

4. Now, we absolutely [*radicalement*] must be done with a certain infantile impatience, and understand that, in order for us to be able to define, defend, and dis-

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"Sur l'orientation des activités," text circulated within the S. ou B. group (March 1963). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 291–305.

seminate among the workers positions on what is to be done and not to be done, three essential conditions presently are lacking, and will only be given with time and as we do our work:

a) Nothing can be done in this domain in the absence of a minimum amount of struggles by the workers—struggles that, on certain points at least, tend to break with the established order.

b) In part due to the absence of such struggles and to the overall situation that their absence expresses, in part due to insufficient work on our part, we still are not up to the task of defining concrete positions on the problems faced by the workers in their attempts to struggle and to become organized.

c) Quantitatively speaking, the group is minuscule and its roots are insecure.

5. These traits are not just passing ones, but profound and long-lasting, even if ultimately they should be outgrown. The first and second are notably tied to the overall situation of modern capitalist society (and they appear, till now, in aggravated form in France). Elsewhere it has been shown that almost all forms of organization and action as well as traditional demands have been either emptied of their content or integrated into the normal functioning of the capitalist system. The result is that, even when the workers have "entered into struggle," what we might say or propose remains abstract or superfluous, or garners no response. For example, after pressure from below, or even without it, the unions may organize a strike for higher wages for an unlimited time period and come out winning. (Not only is there nothing impossible about this, it is part of their normal role, as shown by the large "officially sanctioned" strikes periodically called in the United States, England, Germany, etc. That until now this has not taken place in France is due to the country's peculiar national conditions, and in due course we should expect that, with the transformations French capitalism has undergone, the unions here too will assume their function of lodging economic demands. For these, strikes organized and controlled by the unions remain one tool. The present miners' strikes may be considered as the first large-scale manifestation of this phenomenon.) We are, of course, for wage increases. But we know too that these are a part of the regular functioning of contemporary capitalism, and that this character does not change the fact that even now capitalist companies often give in only under threat of or after a strike. We therefore cannot tie the general positions we take (these positions being *specific* to us, i.e., they distinguish us from all other currents, groups, organizations, etc., that are also for wage increases) to such a strike by way of the objectives it sets for itself. (It would be something else if, under exceptional circumstances, capitalism were to become momentarily incapable of granting even a 1 percent increase—or if, Zeus driving mad those whom he wishes to destroy, the system might on its own thus light the fuses by obstinately refusing to grant that which it could have granted, as has happened before in history.) Nor can a strike be tied to our positions by the way in which it is led—if an established bureaucracy (that of a union) organizes it, directs it, and maintains control over it, and if the workers support it "in an orderly and disciplined fashion," as happens in the overwhelming majority of cases. Nor can the connection be found in the idea (which was and remains, for example, that of the Trotskyists) that the unfolding of the struggle will lead to a break between the workers and the labor bureaucracy ("outflanking"). Experience shows that, in *these* kinds

of struggles, there practically never is any outflanking. Can we propose other objectives, and another manner of conducting the strike? Which ones? Bidding up wage increases makes no sense and will not open anyone's ears. We always can, of course, propose that increases not be hierarchized, that strikers elect strike committees responsible to them, and so on—this always will be correct in the abstract. But in the abstract alone. For, almost always, the way in which the strike is begun and the attitude of the strikers themselves ensure that these positions will have at the present time no hold over the real situation, will not get things rolling, and, presented in this form and upon this occasion, will not have any influence on anybody. To this is added a factor that, while being contingent, is no less decisive right now: what we will say will be perceived as—and will actually be—parachuted in from the outside, which is serious not because we would be striking a blow against people's spontaneity, but because what we will say runs the risk of being false or unreal, and because for people, *who* says something counts as much as and more than *what* somebody says. In short, we cannot once every five years send to the north of France three students who would tell the miners how to organize their strike and define its objectives.

6. We must therefore understand that, with regard to a certain type of struggle in the present period—of which the "pitched battles" conducted by the trade unions over economic demands are one type, and of which certain political kinds of agitation, like that of April 1961,[4] are another type—we can propose nothing that would be specific to us and that would get things rolling for some real possible action. We can only inform and explain—and here again, on the condition that we have something to say that is not the same as what others are saying. There is nothing to be astonished about in this situation, for *this* type of struggle fits perfectly within the workings of the established society—and what we can propose will always contain a break (even if it is partial) with the established order (whether it be a matter of antihierarchical demands or of the autonomous direction of struggles by the workers themselves). Now, workers who go on strike for a wage increase under the conditions described above do so without putting into question, either subjectively or objectively, this order (even if at the origin of the strike one can always find a profound revolt against the condition of the working class, and even if this revolt sometimes manifests itself as the strike unfolds). Certainly, some cases can exist where this situation, which looks to us like a dead end, evolves in an unexpected way, where the institutionalized strike gets out of order, where the stuff of society catches on fire. But these cases are exceedingly rare, and when they do occur, no one is mistaken about it—not among ourselves in any case. We did not hesitate an instant to recognize in the Belgian strikes an event that contained a virtual rupture with the established order—and we are not changing this assessment today. Nevertheless, a prerevolutionary situation does not arise every day. To say that there is no determinism in history does not mean that everything is possible, still less probable, at every instant.

7. In contrast, there exist in modern capitalist societies types of struggles that objectively contain this partial rupture with the established order—and this almost inevitably entails that they unfold outside of or against the existing labor or political organizations. Such are, for example, the informal or wildcat strikes in the United

States or in England, and, in certain respects, the activities of the Committee of One Hundred against nuclear weapons in England or the blacks' civil rights movement in the United States. Movements of this type are still practically nonexistent in France, either inside business enterprises or outside them. Nonetheless, with the modernization of French capitalism, and if the unions henceforth "assume" more their economic role, they should appear and develop here, too. This type of movement ought to be our essential preoccupation in this domain; and, if the group expands and sets down more roots within the laboring population, our outlook ought to be to become, through our comrades and our sympathizers, the catalysts and the initiators of these movements.

8. Both with regard to this type of movement and with regard to every other type of possible action, we must understand, nevertheless, that we will not move forward if we fail to adopt an attitude that is open and experimental. The traditional forms are dead, or have been integrated into the established system; no one can resuscitate them, or make them rescale the slope of degeneration. If what we say is true, this means that new forms will be born—and we see, in the cases mentioned above, that they already are being born. Yet they will be born essentially from the activity of laboring people and in terms of this activity—we cannot decree them (any more than previous forms, which were but the sedimentation of the experience of workers' struggle, were decreed by Marx or Lenin). One can only shrug one's shoulders at the childish demand sometimes formulated within the group that the few of us should invent, here and now, new organizational forms and forms of action for a workers' movement yet to be born. At the very most, we can help them to be born through actions that necessarily will have at the beginning an experimental character. This may mean that we should try out (not at every turn, nor without careful reflection) actions that are without precedent. The experience of these attempts alone will tell us what they are worth (the Solidarity group's activity around a rent strike is one example; it produced results that were, on the whole, positive). This may also mean that we enter into actions in which people who want to struggle against some part of the established order will participate with us, without our trying at all costs to clear up in advance, for others or even for ourselves, all the ideological principles and outcomes involved (example: the activity of our English comrades in the Committee of One Hundred, or of our American comrades in the blacks' civil rights movement). In all these cases, our activity will be fruitful neither for the organization nor for the revolution unless we have totally rid ourselves of Stalino-Trotskyist residues of infiltration and manipulation of people. The experience of our English comrades in the Committee of One Hundred provides a striking positive confirmation of this imperative: according to what they themselves are saying about this experience, its success is due in large part to the fact that they have always acted loyally toward the Committee and not as a faction, that they have not hesitated to show disagreement among themselves in public, and so on. We ought not to participate in these kinds of activities in order to recruit two new people immediately into the group, or in order to be able to make a single use of their platform where we can lay out our ideas—but rather in order to help people to do something, and to do it in the right direction. This is another way of saying that we must take the people around us and what they do seriously—and that this is, even from the most

narrow organizational point of view, by far the most profitable attitude in the long run. Moreover, this ought to be obvious, for we ought not to participate in some movement unless we think that, through what it contains and through its dynamic, it can help people evolve in a positive direction; therefore, the movement's own dynamic really matters to us as such.

9. In summary, there are two types of pathological behavior, two neuroses, it must be said, of which one must rid oneself. The first is the neurosis of the Revolutionary Headquarters. It serves no purpose to give the French population some slogans, or even some advice, on what it has to do in certain circumstances, when neither the objective conditions nor the attitude of this population furnishes us with either an audience or the possibility of giving concrete form to our principles. We are neither solicited nor bound to voice our opinion on everything that happens, still less on what is to be done. These reflex reactions with regard to current events are the province of journalism, not of politics. When taking a political stand one responds to the solicitation of the event only when one is in a position to influence it; otherwise, one confines oneself to inscribing it within the objective conditions of one's action and to drawing the consequences of this situation. But we "act"—that is to say, basically, we speak—as if we were ruled by the fear of being judged upon the fact that "we have not taken a position." And here appears the second neurosis, the neurosis of the Last Judgment, which both obliges us to take a position on everything, for fear of committing the crime by omission, and blocks us, for a partial error would be the positive commission of the crime. Not everything we do, however, is or will be an inalterable model for all future action, and history is not a worn-out film that breaks just as it shows us grimacing unpleasantly. The main thing about history is that it continues. It is the most naive of moral consciences that passes summary judgment on isolated acts taken as such. A revolutionary organization is judged on its *line*, that is to say, through the continuity of its action, that is to say again, on the whole of what it has decided to do and not do.

10. Finally, we must understand that one can neither do everything at once nor leap beyond certain stages. The group should at present endeavor to improve the quality of its work, modify the content of its propaganda, broaden its recruitment efforts, become rooted in certain milieux. With its present forces, and those that may be foreseen for it in the short term, this nearly exhausts its production capacity. We therefore must make a harsh choice for the few other outside activities it may be possible for us to undertake at the present time, under penalty of botching everything through a desire to do everything at once.

11. The first of its activities is to enlarge and deepen its outside contacts, which is, to begin with, the task of each comrade. Each of us, of course, has such contacts, everyone recognizes their importance, and most comrades are working in this direction. But our attitude in this regard is not always correct; it oscillates between the difficulty of appearing completely as what we are and an aggressive way of seeming so, leading to a certain sectarianism. Each of us ought to be, to begin with, a real individual among other real individuals in a real setting [*milieu*]. As such, each member can and should entertain with others relations that are, up to a certain point, "disinterested"—namely, not exclusively ruled by the idea of recruiting, selling, fundraising, and the like. This is essential first of all in order to be able quite simply

to establish relationships, but also for a more profound reason: those who do not necessarily think like us are not people at the rate of 20, 30, or 50 percent, depending on the level of their relationship to us. Even when people think otherwise than we do, the reasons they have for doing so ought to be interesting from our point of view, and these can be good reasons, too. Next, we must be willing, we must even seek out people in order to talk with them about *their* problems; if what we say is true, these problems inevitably reflect, to one degree or another, the problem of society. Finally, without appearing as a political fanatic, a comrade ought to be able to advance and to defend his ideas calmly and knowledgeably. Among the contacts thus acquired, the comrade ought to apply himself to cultivating a few of them in a consistent and systematic way with a view toward circulating the organization's material, conducting discussions and interviews that can be used in *Pouvoir Ouvrier*, obtaining financial support, inviting these promising contacts to some of the prearranged meetings of the group, and perhaps ultimately recruiting them. We must convince ourselves that a contact cultivated in this fashion is never one made in vain, for most of these people will be encountered again during a period of crisis.

12. The problem of the participation of comrades in trade unions at their places [*milieu*] of work ought, as has always been said, to be resolved in each specific case according to the concrete conditions and opportunities that such participation offers. (By participation we do not mean simply taking out a union card, which at present commits one to nothing and, as such, does not interfere with anything as it offers nothing.)

13. The problem of the group's social composition and its immediate surroundings [*milieu*] is obviously fundamental: the group must succeed in recruiting and retaining workers and, more generally, wage earners, and it must gain sympathizers in these social categories. This depends on factors that are not solely within our power (the present attitude of workers and wage earners toward participation in an organization, very correctly analyzed by Mothé in an in-group text in April 1961), but also depends on what we say, on our actual operation, and, finally, to a non-negligible degree, on the intensity and the quality of the effort we wish to make in this direction. This effort ought at the present time to be given concrete expression on three levels:

a) taking stock of the contacts the organization has in this area [*milieu*] and pursuing them actively;

b) choosing a few companies where we have a genuine inside contact and starting systematic, long, and exacting work in that direction;

c) undertaking – or continuing – in a systematic fashion to work on obtaining contacts and circulating propaganda among groups of young workers (youth hostels, training centers).

14. As experience has shown, student circles [*milieu*] are the only area in which at the moment we can recruit with relative ease and have a certain audience. This activity can be given concrete expression if we carry out the following tasks (which are not going to be accomplished in a week, but over a year, gradually, and as we grow in strength):

a) Students in the group ought to conduct a general program of propaganda concerning the organization's ideas by addressing other students. Beyond selling the or-

ganization's publications, they should first draw up (with the help of other comrades in the group), print, and distribute a text defining our general positions and our positions on student problems; next, they should draft, print, and circulate explanatory tracts on all the events and facts of interest to student circles, when we have something specific to say about them; finally, if feasible (or useful, as to be judged on the spot), they should participate at public meetings of contrary tendencies, eventually circulating tracts or texts polemicizing against organizations or ideologies that are polarizing student circles.

b) Students in the group ought to participate seriously in their work setting and, on the basis of this participation, help other students to understand the signification of the problems they encounter in their work (their studies), the connection of these problems with the crisis of culture and of the latter with the crisis of society. This participation can offer students within the group, at least in certain disciplines, the occasion to express our ideas both "officially" and in connection with the interests of other students. On the basis of this activity, and with the aid of other comrades within the group, the student comrades would be able to draft texts for publication in *S. ou B.* or for circulation in student circles.

c) Students within the group ought to define an attitude toward the problems students' actual living conditions [*conditions réelles d'existence*] pose for them and ought to work out a principal text on this question, allowing each of them to take consistent public positions when the occasion should arise. They ought to encourage and to support every attempt by students to ameliorate their living conditions through collective actions that they themselves direct.

15. The struggle against nuclear armaments can and should be for us an important theme of our propaganda. But for the moment it does not seem that the organization is capable of taking any initiative to rally forces toward this end, or of playing any particularly active role in the groups that are trying to set themselves up. This is not a matter of principle, but rather of contingent considerations, that is to say, of rationality in the choice we make about what efforts to be involved in. No comparison can be made in this regard between the situation in France and the situation in England, where our comrades have not created (and never could have created) the movement, but rather participated in an already existing and strongly established movement.

Notes

1. "Le Mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne," *S. ou B.*, 31–33 (December 1960, April 1961, December 1961) [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 47–203; translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 226–315].

2. T/E: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 38.

3. T/E: Sarcelles was the first, and the most contested, of the new suburban developments erected around Paris (1958–61); it was built primarily as sleeping quarters for urban commuters (*cité dortoire*).

4. T/E: April 1961 saw the failure of a military putsch at Algiers and the mobilization of the French Left in the streets of Paris.

a) The "platform" mentioned here is published below with the title under which it appeared in *S. ou B.*, "Recommencer la Revolution," as are the texts on the group's propaganda and activities. [T/E: "Recommencing the Revolution" is the next chapter in the present volume.]

b) Indicated here were a part of the texts later set forth in the text on propaganda (see below).

c) D[aniel] Mothé, "Les jeunes générations ouvrières," *S. ou B.*, 33 (December 1961); and Claude Martin, "La jeunesse étudiante," *S. ou B.*, 34 (March 1963). [Now in *CMR 2*, pp. 259–78; T/E: see the translation of this last article, which was coauthored by Castoriadis: "Student Youth," chapter 4 of the present volume.]

d) The comrades who had left the group in the autumn of 1958 thought that the essential task of a workers' journal would be to publish letters from its readers (a position that more or less was adopted in the periodicals known as *Informations et liaisons ouvrières*, and then *Informations et correspondance ouvrières*).

3
Recommencing the Revolution

I. The End of Classical Marxism

1. Three massive facts today confront revolutionaries who still wish to claim they are acting in such a way that they understand what they are doing, that is, in full knowledge of the relevant facts:

The way capitalism functions has been fundamentally altered in relation to the reality of the pre-1939 era. It has altered even more in relation to the analysis of it Marxism had provided.

As an organized class movement explicitly and permanently contesting capitalist domination, the workers' movement has disappeared.

Colonial or semicolonial domination by advanced countries over backward countries has been abolished without this abolition being accompanied anywhere by a revolutionary mutation [*transcroissance*] within the movement of the masses, nor have the foundations of capitalism in the ruling countries been shaken by this process.

2. For those who refuse to mystify themselves, it is clear that, in practice, the establishment of these facts means the ruination of classical Marxism as a *system* of

"Recommencer la révolution" was circulated within the group in March 1963 and then published in *S. ou B.*, 35 (January 1964). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 307–65. [T/E: Translation by Maurice Brinton, as *Redefining Revolution, Solidarity Pamphlet*, 44 (no date), 24 pp., with a "Solidarity Introduction." The present version has been edited with a view toward standardizing terminology and providing a text more faithful to the original (Brinton's fine original translation was geared to Solidarity's working-class British audience). As with other Solidarity translations used, footnotes added by the original translator have been eliminated unless otherwise indicated.]

thought and action as it was formulated, developed, and maintained between 1847 and 1939. For these findings signify that Marx's analysis of capitalism in his masterwork (the analysis of the economy), Lenin's analysis of imperialism, and Marx-Trotsky's conception of the permanent revolution as applied to backward countries have been refuted or outstripped, and that virtually all traditional forms of organization and action in the workers' movement (save for those of revolutionary periods) are irreversibly bankrupt. They signify the ruination of classical Marxism as a *concrete system of thought* having some grasp on reality. Apart from a few abstract ideas, nothing that is essential in *Capital* is to be found in the reality of today. Conversely, what is essential in reality today (the changes in and the crisis of the nature of work, the scission and opposition between the formal organization and the real organization of production and between the formal and the real functioning of institutions, the phenomenon of bureaucratization, the consumer society, working-class apathy, the nature of Eastern-bloc countries, the changes in backward countries and their relations with the advanced countries, the crisis of all aspects of life and the increasing importance of phenomena previously considered peripheral, people's attempts to find a way out of this crisis) can be understood only in light of different analyses. The best in Marx's work can serve as a source of inspiration for these analyses, but set in front of these analyses is instead a vulgar and bastardized Marxism, the only kind practiced today by his self-proclaimed "defenders" of every ilk, which acts as a screen blocking one's view. The findings also signify the ruination of classical Marxism (and of Leninism-Trotskyism-Bordigism, etc.) as a *program of action* in which what was to be done by revolutionaries at any given moment was coherently linked (at least on the level of intentions) with the real actions of the working class and with an overall theoretical viewpoint. When, for instance, a Marxist organization supported or led a working-class strike for higher wages, it did so (a) with a strong likelihood of receiving a real hearing from the workers, (b) as the only instituted organization fighting on their side, and (c) in the belief that each working-class victory on the wages front was a blow delivered to the objective structure of the capitalist edifice. None of the measures advocated in the classical Marxist programs can today fulfill these three requirements.

3. Certainly, society today still remains profoundly divided. It functions against the immense majority of working people. In their everyday lives, these people express their opposition to this society with half of each one of their gestures. The present crisis of humanity will be able to be resolved only through a socialist revolution. But these ideas run the risk of remaining empty abstractions, pretexts for sermons or for a blind and spasmodic activism, if we do not strive to understand how society's divisions are concretely being realized at the present hour, how this society functions, what forms of reaction and struggle laboring people adopt against the ruling strata and their system, what new kinds of revolutionary activity related to people's concrete existence and struggle in society and to a coherent and lucid view of the world are possible under these conditions. For all of this, what is needed is nothing less than a radical theoretical and practical renewal. It is this effort at renewal and the specific *new* ideas through which this effort has taken on concrete form at each stage that have characterized the Socialisme ou Barbarie group from the outset, not simple-minded rigid adherence to the idea of class struggle, of the proletariat

as revolutionary force, or of revolution. Such blind adherence would have sterilized us, as it did the Trotskyists, Bordigists, and nearly all communists and "left" socialists. From the first issue of our review we have affirmed, in conclusion of our critique of conservativism in the realm of theory, that "*without development* of revolutionary theory, no development of revolutionary action."[1] Ten years later, after having shown that the basic postulates as well as the logical structure of Marx's economic theory reflect "essentially bourgeois ideas" and having affirmed that a total reconstruction of revolutionary theory was needed, we concluded, "Whatever the contents of the organization's revolutionary theory or program, and however deep their connections with the experience and needs of the proletariat, there always will be the possibility, the *certainty* even, that at some point this theory and program will be outstripped by history, and there will always be the risk that those who have defended them up to that point will tend to make them into absolutes and to try to subordinate and adapt the creations of living history to fit them."[2]

4. This theoretical reconstruction, which remains a permanent task, has nothing to do with a vague and irresponsible revisionism. We never have abandoned traditional positions because they were traditional, simply saying: they are out of date, times have changed. On the contrary, we have shown, on each occasion, why they were wrong or why they have been outstripped, and we have defined that with which they should be replaced (save in the cases where it was then and remains today impossible for a group of revolutionaries to define, in the absence of mass activity, new forms to replace those that history itself has refuted). But this has not prevented, even within the Socialisme ou Barbarie group, our reconstruction effort from encountering, at each of its crucial stages, bitter opposition from conservative elements representing the type of militant who retains nostalgia for the golden age of the workers' movement (a golden age that, like all golden ages, is, moreover, perfectly imaginary) and who moves forward in history only by proceeding backwards, constantly wishing to return to the era in which, as he believes, theory and program were indisputable, established once and for all, and constantly corroborated by the activity of the masses.[3]

5. It is not possible to discuss this conservativism in depth, for its main characteristic is its failure to confront the problems that count today, usually denying that they exist. It is a negative and sterile current. This sterility obviously is not a personality or character trait. It is an objective phenomenon, the sure consequence of the terrain on which conservatives place themselves and the inevitable result of the very conception they have of revolutionary theory.

A contemporary physicist who would set himself the task of defending Newtonian physics against all comers would condemn himself to total sterility and would throw a neurotic fit every time he heard someone speak about such monstrosities as antimatter, particles that also are waves, the expansion of the universe, or the collapse of causality, locality, and identity as absolute categories. The plight of the person who would today simply defend Marxism or a handful of ideas he has borrowed from it is just as desperate. For, taken in this form, the question of Marxism has been settled in the real world and is beyond discussion: leaving aside for the moment the theoretical reconstruction we have been carrying out, Marxism quite simply no longer exists historically as a living theory. Marxism was not, could not, and did

not seek to be a theory like the others, whose truth was consigned to books; it was not another Platonism, another Spinozism, another Hegelianism. According to its own program and its most deep-seated content, Marxism could live only as a constantly renewed theoretical search that sheds light on a world in constant change and as a practice that constantly transforms the world while also being transformed by it (the indissoluble unity of the two corresponding to the Marxian concept of praxis).

Where is that kind of Marxism today? Where, since 1923 (the year Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* appeared), has a single study that has advanced Marxism been published? Where, since 1940 (the year of Trotsky's death), has a single text been written that defends the traditional ideas on a level high enough to allow one to discuss them without being ashamed of doing so? Where, since the Spanish Civil War, has there been a Marxist group that has actually acted on its principles and connected these with mass activity? Quite simply: nowhere!

It is not one of the least of the tragicomic paradoxes to which the self-proclaimed defenders of Marxism today have been condemned that they are carrying out this rape and killing of Marxism even as they undertake to defend it, and because of this very attempt. For they can defend Marxism only by remaining silent about what has happened to it over the past forty years. As if actual history did not count! As if the presence or absence in real history of a theory and a political program had no effect on the truth or the signification of such a theory or program, which somehow would reside "elsewhere." As if it were not one of the indestructible principles taught to us by Marx that an ideology is not to be judged by the words it employs but by what it becomes in social reality. They can defend Marxism only by transforming it into its contrary, into an eternal doctrine that could never be upset by any fact (forgetting in the process that if that were so, Marxism would no longer be able in its turn to "upset the facts," i.e., it would then possess no historical effectiveness). Like a despairing lover whose mistress has prematurely died, they can now express their love only by raping the corpse.

6. Less and less does this conservative attitude take the overt form of a defense of Marxist orthodoxy as such. It obviously is difficult to uphold without fear of ridicule the idea that one should remain true to the truths revealed once and for all by Marx and Lenin. It now takes rather the following form: faced with the crisis and the disappearance of the workers' movement, one reasons as if this state of affairs affected only certain specifically designated organizations (the Communist party, the SFIO [Socialist party], the [Communist-affiliated] CGT labor federation, etc.); confronted by the transformations capitalism is undergoing, one reasons as if these transformations represented merely an accumulation of similar characteristics that in no way was altering its essence.

One thus forgets, and makes others forget, that the crisis of the workers' movement is not simply the degeneration of social-democratic or Bolshevik organizations, but a crisis embracing practically all the traditional expressions of working-class activity; that it is not some scaly excrescence covering over the intact revolutionary body of the proletariat or a penalty of condemnation imposed from without, but an expression of problems lying at the very heart of the workers' situation, upon which, moreover, this crisis acts in its turn.[4] One forgets, and makes others forget, that the

quantitative accumulation of such "similar traits" of capitalist society is accompanied by qualitative changes, that "proletarianization" in contemporary society in no way has the simple meaning attributed to it in classical Marxism and that bureaucratization is not a simple and superficial corollary to the process of capital concentration, but entails profound modifications in the structure and functioning of society.[5] Thus, what one does is simply to offer a few "additional" interpretations— as if a conception of history and the world that would unite theory and practice, which is what classical Marxism wanted to be, could be subjected to some "additions," like a pile of potato sacks whose nature would not be altered by the addition of a few more sacks to the pile.

In doing so, one reduces the unknown to the known, which is tantamount to eliminating what is new, and ends up reducing history to one huge tautology. In the best of cases, one "makes repairs at least cost," a practice that in the long run is an infallible way of going broke ideologically, just as it is a sure way of going broke financially in the business world. This attitude, while psychologically understandable, is henceforth impossible. Beyond a certain point it becomes clearly apparent that it no longer can be taken seriously, for a thousand reasons, the first of which is that it is intrinsically contradictory (ideas cannot remain intact while reality is changing, nor can a new reality be understood without a revolution in ideas) and the last of which is that it is theological (and, like every theology, it basically expresses fear and a fundamental feeling of insecurity toward the unknown, neither of which do we have any reason to share).

7. Indeed, the time has arrived to attain a clear awareness that contemporary reality no longer can be grasped simply at the cost of a low-budget revision of classical Marxism, or even through any kind of revision at all. In order to be understood, contemporary reality requires a new whole in which breaks with the classical ideas are just as important as (and much more significant than) the ties of kinship. This fact was able to be hidden even from our own eyes by the gradual character of our theoretical elaboration and, undoubtedly, also by a desire to maintain the greatest possible degree of historical continuity. Nevertheless, it becomes strikingly apparent when we look back over the path traveled and as we gauge the distance separating the ideas that appear essential to us today from those of classical Marxism. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point.[6]

a) For classical Marxism, the division of society was between capitalists who own the means of production and propertyless proletarians. Today it should be seen as a division between directors and executants.

b) Society was seen as dominated by the abstract power of impersonal capital. Today, we see it as dominated by a hierarchical bureaucratic structure.

c) For Marx, the central category for understanding capitalist social relations was that of *reification*. Reification was the result of the transformation of all human relations into *market* relations.[7] For us, the central structuring moment of contemporary society is not the market but its bureaucratic-hierarchical "organization." The basic category to be used in grasping social relations is that of the *scission* between the processes of direction and execution of collective activities.

d) In Marx, the category of reification found its natural continuation in the analysis of labor power as a commodity, in the the literal and full sense of this term. As

a commodity, labor power had an exchange value defined by "objective" factors (costs of production and reproduction of labor power) and a use value the purchaser was able to extract at will. The worker was seen as a passive object of the capitalist economy and of capitalist production. For us, this abstraction is halfway a mystification. Labor power can never become purely and simply a commodity (despite capitalism's best efforts). Labor power has no exchange value determined by "objective" factors, for wage levels are determined essentially by formal and informal working-class struggles. Labor power has no predefined use value, for productivity levels are the stake in an incessant struggle at the point of production and the worker is an active as much as a passive subject in this struggle.

e) For Marx, the inherent "contradiction" of capitalism was that the development of the forces of production was becoming, beyond a certain point, incompatible with capitalist forms of property ownership and of private appropriation of the social product, and would have to "break them asunder." For us, the inherent contradiction of capitalism is to be found in the type of scission between direction and execution that capitalism brings about, and in its consequent need simultaneously to seek the exclusion and to solicit the participation of individuals in their activities.

f) For the classical revolutionary way of thinking, the proletariat suffers its history until the day it explodes its situation. For us, the proletariat makes its history, under given conditions, and its struggles are constantly transforming capitalist society at the same time that these struggles transform the proletariat itself.

g) For the classical revolutionary way of thinking, capitalist culture produces mystifications pure and simple, which are then denounced as such, or it produces scientific truths and valid works, in which case one denounces the fact that they have been appropriated exclusively by the privileged strata of society. For us, this culture, in all its manifestations, both participates in the general crisis of society *and* helps to prepare the way for a new form of human life.

h) For Marx, production will always remain the "realm of necessity." Whence comes the Marxist movement's implicit idea that socialism is essentially a matter of rearranging the economic and social consequences of a technical infrastructure that is at the same time both neutral and inevitable. For us, production must become the realm of creativity for the associated producers. And the conscious transformation of technology, aimed at putting it at the service of *homo faber*, must be a central task of postrevolutionary society.

i) Already for Marx, and much more so for the Marxist movement, the development of the forces of production was at the center of everything, and its incompatibility with capitalist forms brought history's condemnation down upon these forms. Whence the quite natural identification of socialism with nationalization and economic planning. For us, the essence of socialism is people's domination over all aspects of their lives and in the first place over their work. Whence the idea that socialism is inconceivable outside of the management of production by the associated producers, and without the power of workers' councils.

j) For Marx, "bourgeois right" and therefore wage inequality would still have to prevail during a period of transition. For us, a revolutionary society could not survive and develop if it did not immediately instaurate absolute wage equality.

k) Finally, and to stick to fundamentals, the traditional movement has always

been dominated by the twin concepts of economic determinism and the leading role of the Party. For us, at the center of everything is the autonomy of laboring people, the masses' capacity for self-direction, without which every idea of socialism immediately turns into a mystification. This entails a new conception of the revolutionary process, as well as of revolutionary organization and politics.

It is not difficult to see that these ideas—whether they are true or false matters little for the moment—represent neither "additions" nor partial revisions, but constitute rather the elements for an all-around theoretical reconstruction.

8. One must also grasp that this reconstruction affects not only the content of the ideas, but also the very type of theoretical conception we are attempting to make. Just as it is vain to search today for a type of organization that would be able to be, in the new period to come, a "substitute" for trade unions, resuming somehow its previously positive role but without the negative traits now associated with unions—in short, to seek to invent a type of organization that would be a union without being one, while all the time remaining one—so it is illusory to believe that it will be possible for "another Marxism" to exist henceforth that would not be Marxism. The ruination of Marxism is not only the ruination of a certain number of specific ideas (though we should point out, if need be, that through this process of ruination a number of fundamental discoveries and a way of envisaging history and society remain that no one can any longer ignore). It is also the ruination of a certain type of connection among ideas, as well as between ideas and reality or action. In brief, it is the ruination of the conception of a closed theory (and, even more, of a closed theoretico-practical system) that thought it could enclose the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of the historical period presently occurring within a certain number of allegedly scientific schemata.

With this ruination, a phase in the history of the workers' movement—and, we should add, in the history of humanity—is drawing to a close. We can call it the theological phase, with the understanding that there can be and there is a theology of "science" that is not better, but rather worse, than the other type of theology (inasmuch as it gives those who share in this belief the false conviction that their faith is "rational"). It is the phase of faith, be it faith in a Supreme Being, be it in an "exceptional" man or a group of "exceptional" men, be it in an impersonal truth established once and for all and written up as a doctrine. It is the phase during which man became alienated in his own creations, whether imaginary or real, theoretical or practical. Never again will there be a complete theory that would need merely to be "updated." Incidentally, in real life there never was any theory of this sort, for all great theoretical discoveries have veered off into the imaginary as soon as one tried to convert them into systems, Marxism no less than the others.

What there has been, and what there will continue to be, is a living theoretical process, from whose womb emerge moments of truth destined to be outstripped (were it only through their integration into another whole within which they no longer have the same meaning). This does not entail some sort of skepticism: at each instant and for each stage in our experience, *there are* truths and errors, and there is always the need to carry out a provisional totalization, ever changing and ever open, of what is true. The idea of a complete and definitive theory, however, is today only a bureaucrat's phantasm helping him to manipulate the oppressed; for the op-

pressed, it can only be the equivalent, in modern-day terms, of an essentially irrational faith.

At each stage in our development, we ought therefore to assert positively those elements about which we are certain, but we also must recognize—and not just by paying lip service—that at the frontiers of our reflection and our practice we encounter problems whose solution we do not know in advance, and perhaps we will not know for a good while; we may not even know whether the solution will oblige us to abandon positions we would have died defending the day before. Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, each of us is obliged in our personal lives to display this lucidity and this courage in the face of the unknownness of the perpetually renewed creation into which we are advancing. Revolutionary politics cannot be the last refuge for neurotic rigidity and the neurotic need for security.

9. More than ever before, the problem of the fate of human society is now posed in global terms. The fate of the two-thirds of humanity that live in nonindustrialized countries; the relations these countries maintain with the industrialized countries; more profound still, the structure and the dynamic of a world society that is gradually emerging—these questions not only are starting to take on central importance, they are being raised, in one form or another, day after day. For us, however, we who live in a modern capitalist society, the primary task is to analyze this society, the fate of the workers' movement born therein, the orientation revolutionaries should adopt for themselves. This task is *objectively* the primary one, since it is in fact the forms of life of modern capitalism that dominate the world and shape the evolution of other countries. This task is also the primary one *for us*, for we are nothing if we cannot define ourselves, both theoretically and practically, in relation to our own society. It is to this definition that the present text is devoted.[8]

II. Modern Bureaucratic Capitalism

10. In no way can it be said that capitalism, whether in its "private" or in its totally bureaucratic form, is unable to continue to develop the forces of production. Nor is there any insurmountable economic contradiction to be found in its mode of operation. More generally speaking, there is no contradiction between the development of the forces of production and capitalist economic forms or capitalist production relations. To state that a socialist regime would be able to develop the forces of production infinitely faster is not to point out a contradiction. And to state that there is a contradiction between capitalist forms and the development of human beings is a sophism, for to speak of the development of human beings has meaning only to the exact extent that they are considered as something other than "productive forces." Capitalism is engaged in a movement of expanding the forces of production, and itself constantly creates the conditions for this expansion.

Classical economic crises of overproduction correspond to a historically obsolete phase characterized by the capitalist class's lack of organization. Such crises are completely unknown in totally bureaucratic capitalism (as exists in Eastern-bloc countries). And they only have a minor equivalent in the economic fluctuations of modern industrial countries, where state control over the economy can and actually does maintain such fluctuations within narrow limits.

11. There is neither a growing "reserve army of the unemployed" nor a relative or absolute "pauperization" of the working class that would prevent the system from selling off its products or would render its long-term operation impossible. "Full employment" (in the capitalist sense and within capitalist limits) and the rise in mass consumption (a type of consumption that is capitalist in its form and in its content) are both the prerequisite for and the result of the expansion of production, which capitalism in actual fact achieves. Within its current limits, the continuous rise in workers' real wages not only does not undermine the foundations of capitalism as a system but is the condition for its survival. The same will go, to an increasing degree, for the shortening of the work week.

12. None of this prevents the capitalist economy from being full of irrationalities and antinomies in all its manifestations. Still less does it prevent capitalism from being immensely wasteful as compared with the possibilities of a socialist form of production. These irrationalities, however, do not come to our attention because of some analysis of the kind found in *Capital.* They are the irrationalities found in the bureaucratic management of the economy, which exists in its pure and unadulterated form in the Eastern-bloc countries. In the Western countries they are mixed with residues from the private-anarchic phase of capitalism.

These irrationalities express the incapacity of a separate ruling stratum to manage rationally any field of activity in an alienated society, not the autonomous functioning of "economic laws" independent of the action of individuals, groups, and classes. This is the reason why they are irrationalities, and never absolute impossibilities, except at the moment when the dominated classes refuse to make the system work any longer.

13. Under capitalism, changes in labor and in the way it is organized are dominated by two profoundly related tendencies: bureaucratization on the one hand, mechanization-automation on the other. Taken together, these tendencies constitute the directors' basic response to the executants' struggle against their exploitation and their alienation. But this fact does not lead to a simple, straightforward, and uniform evolution of labor, of its structure, of the skills it requires, of its relationship to the object of labor and to work machinery; nor does it entail a simple evolution of relations among laboring people themselves. If the reduction of all tasks to compartmentalized tasks has long been and remains the central phenomenon of capitalist production, this process of reducing labor to compartmentalized tasks is beginning to attain its limits in the sectors most characteristic of modern production, where it is becoming impossible to divide up tasks any further without making work itself impossible. Similarly, the reduction of tasks to simple jobs requiring no special qualifications (the destruction of skilled jobs) encounters its limits in modern production, too, and even tends to be reversed by the growing need for greater skills that most modern industries require. Mechanization and automation are leading to a compartmentalization of tasks, but tasks that have been sufficiently compartmentalized and simplified are taken over at the next stage by "totally" automated units, which entail a restructuring of manpower that involves a division between a group of "passive," isolated, and unskilled attendants, on the one hand, and highly skilled and specialized technicians working in teams, on the other hand.

Side by side with all this, and still the largest segment of the work force in numer-

ical terms, traditionally structured production sectors continue to exist. In these sectors are found all the historically sedimented strata of previous eras in the evolution of work, along with completely new sectors (notably office work) where traditional concepts and distinctions lose in this regard almost all their meaning. We therefore must consider as hasty and unverified extrapolations both the traditional idea (from Marx's *Capital*) that capitalism entails the pure and simple destruction of skills and the creation of an undifferentiated mass of automaton-workers, slaves to their machines, as well as the more recent idea (of Romano and Ria Stone [Grace (Lee) Boggs] in *The American Worker*)[9] of the growing importance of a category of universal workers working on universal machines. Both these tendencies exist as partial tendencies, together with a third tendency toward the proliferation of new categories both skilled and specialized at the same time, but it is neither possible nor necessary to decide in some arbitrary fashion that a single one of these categories represents the future.

14. It follows that neither the problem of uniting laboring people in the struggle against the present system nor that of workers' management of the business enterprise after the revolution has a guaranteed solution that relies on some automatic process incorporated into the evolution of technique itself. These problems remain, rather, political problems in the highest meaning of the term: their solution depends on a thoroughgoing raising of people's consciousnesses concerning the totality of society's problems.

Under capitalism, there will always be a problem of uniting the struggles of different categories of laborers who are not in immediately identical situations and who never will be. And during the revolution, and even afterward, workers' management will not consist in the laboring people taking charge of a production process that has become materialized in the form of mechanization and whose objective logic is watertight and beyond argument. Nor will it consist in the deployment of the aptitudes, somehow fully formed, of a collectivity of virtually universal producers, ready-made by capitalism. Workers' management will have to face up to an extraordinarily complex internal differentiation among the various strata of the laboring population; it will have to resolve the problem of how to integrate individuals, various categories of laborers, and different types of activity, for this will be its fundamental problem. Not in any foreseeable future will capitalism produce, through its own workings, a class of laborers that would already be, in itself, a concrete universal. Unless we stick to a sociological concept, actual laboring-class unity can be realized only through the struggle by laboring people and against capitalism. (Let it be said, parenthetically, that to speak today of the proletariat as a class is merely to indulge in descriptive sociology, pure and simple; what unites laboring people as identical members of a group is simply the set of passively shared traits capitalism imposes upon them, and not their attempt to assert themselves as a class that unites itself and opposes itself to the rest of society through their activity, even if fragmentary in character, or through their organization, even if that of a minority.)

The two problems mentioned above [uniting workers in struggle and workers' management] can be resolved only by the association of all the nonexploiting categories of workers at the workplace, manual workers as well as intellectual workers or office workers and technicians. Any attempt at achieving workers' management

that would eliminate a category of workers essential to the modern production process would lead to the collapse of this production process—which could be built back up again only through renewed bureaucratization and the use of coercion.

15. The changes in the structuring of society that have taken place over the past century were not those foreseen by classical Marxism. This has had important consequences. Certainly there has been a "proletarianization" of society in the sense that the old "petty bourgeois" classes have practically disappeared, and in the sense that the overwhelming majority of the population has been transformed into a population of wage and salary earners and has been integrated into the capitalist division of labor found in the business enterprise. But this "proletarianization" differs essentially from the classical image, where society was supposed to have evolved in two opposite directions, toward an enormous pole of industrial workers and toward an infinitesimal one of capitalists. On the contrary, as it has become bureaucratized, and in accordance with the underlying logic of bureaucratization, society has been transformed into a pyramid, or rather a complex set of pyramids.

The transformation of virtually the whole population into a population of wage and salary earners does not signify that there no longer exists anyone but pure and simple executants on the bottom rungs of the ladder. The population absorbed by the bureaucratic-capitalist structure has come to inhabit all tiers of the bureaucratic pyramid. It will continue to do so. And in this pyramid one can detect no tendency toward a reduction of the intermediate layers. Quite the contrary. Although it is difficult to delimit clearly this concept and although it is impossible to make it coincide with the extant statistical categories of analysis, we can with certainty state that in no modern industrial country do the number of "simple executants" (manual workers in industry and their counterparts in other branches: typists, sales personnel, etc.) exceed 50 percent of the laboring population. Moreover, the previously nonproletarianized population has not been absorbed into the industrial sectors of the economy. Except for countries that have not "completed" their industrialization process (Italy, for example), the percentage of the population in industry stopped growing after reaching a ceiling of between 30 percent and (rarely) 50 percent of the active population. The rest are employed in the "service" sectors of the economy (the proportion of the population employed in agriculture is declining rapidly all over and is already negligible in England and the United States).

Even if the increase in the percentages employed in the service sectors were to stop (due to the mechanization and automation now encroaching upon these sectors in their turn), it would be very difficult to *reverse* this tendency, given the increasingly rapid productivity increases occurring in the industrial sector and the consequent rapid decrease in demand for industrial manpower. The combined result of these two factors is that the industrial proletariat in the classical and strict sense (i.e., defined in terms of manual workers or as hourly paid workers, categories that are roughly overlapping) is in the process of declining in relative and sometimes even absolute size. Thus, in the United States, the percentage of the industrial proletariat ("production and allied workers" and "unskilled workers other than those in agriculture and mining," statistics that *include the unemployed*, as listed according to their last job) has fallen from 28 percent in 1947 to 24 percent in 1961, this decline moreover having accelerated appreciably since 1955.[10]

16. In no way do these observations signify that the industrial proletariat has lost its importance, or that it does not have a central role to play in the unfolding of a revolutionary process, as has been confirmed both by the Hungarian Revolution (though in that case not under conditions of modern capitalism) and by the Belgian General Strike. However, our observations clearly show that the revolutionary movement could no longer claim to represent the interests of the immense majority of the population against a small minority if it did not address itself to all categories of the wage-earning and laboring population, excluding the small minority of capitalists and ruling bureaucrats, and if it did not seek to associate the strata of simple executants with intermediary strata of the pyramid, which are nearly as important numerically speaking.

17. Apart from the transformations in the nature of the capitalist State and of capitalist policy that we have analyzed elsewhere,[11] we must understand what the new form of capitalist totalitarianism exactly signifies and what its methods of domination are in present-day society. In present-day totalitarianism, the State, as the central expression of domination of society by a minority, or its appendages and ultimately the ruling strata seize hold of all spheres of social activity and try to model them explicitly after their interests and their outlook. This in no way implies, however, a continuous use of violence or direct coercion, or the suppression of freedoms and formal rights. Violence of course remains the ultimate guarantor of the system, but the system need not have recourse to it every day. It need not resort to violence precisely to the extent that the extension of its grip into almost all domains of activity assures it a more "economical" exercise of its authority, to the extent that its control over the economy and the continuous expansion of the latter allow it most of the time to appease economic demands without major conflict, and to the extent, finally, that rises in the material standard of living and the degeneration of the traditional organizations and ideas of the workers' movement serve as the constant condition for individual privatization, which, though contradictory and transitory, nonetheless signifies that the domination of the system is not explicitly contested by anyone in society.

We must reject the traditional idea that bourgeois democracy is a worm-eaten edifice doomed to give way to fascism in the absence of revolution. First, this "democracy," even as bourgeois democracy, already has effectively disappeared, *not* through the reign of the Gestapo, but through the bureaucratization of all political and state institutions and the concomitant rise of apathy among the population. Second, this new pseudodemocracy (pseudo to the second degree) *is* precisely the adequate form of domination for modern capitalism, which could not do without parties (including socialist and communist ones) and unions, nowadays essential cogs of the system, whatever point of view you might adopt. This has been confirmed by what has happened over the last five years in France, where, despite the decomposition of the state apparatus and the Algerian crisis, there never was a serious chance of a fascist takeover and establishment of a dictatorship. It also has been confirmed by Khrushchevism in Russia, which expresses precisely the bureaucracy's attempt to move on to new methods of domination, the old ones (totalitarian in the traditional sense) having become incompatible with modern society (it is another thing that

there are chances that everything might break apart *during* the passage to these new methods of domination). With the monopoly over violence as its last resort, capitalist domination presently rests on the bureaucratic manipulation of people in their work life, in their consumer life, and everywhere else in their lives.

18. Thus, modern capitalism is essentially a bureaucratized society with a pyramidal, hierarchal structure. In it are not opposed, as in two clearly separate tiers, a small class of exploiters and a large class of producers. The division of society is much more complex and stratified, and no simple criterion is available to sum it up.

The traditional concept of class corresponded to the relation of individuals and social groups to the ownership of the means of production. We have gone beyond this concept under that form, and rightly so, when we insisted upon looking at how individuals and groups are situated in the real relations of production, and when we introduced the concepts of directors and executants. These concepts remain valid for shedding light on the situation of contemporary capitalism, but they cannot be applied in a mechanical fashion. In their pure state, they can be concretely applied only at the very top and the very bottom of the pyramid, thus leaving aside all the intermediate strata, namely, almost half of the population, the half whose tasks involve both execution (with regard to their superiors) and direction (toward those "below"). Certainly, within these intermediate strata one can encounter again some practically "pure" cases. Thus a part of the hierarchal network basically fulfills the functions of coercion and authority, while another part basically fulfills technical functions and includes those who could be called "executants with status" (for example, well-paid technicians or scientists who carry out only the studies or research they are asked to perform). But the collectivization of production has made it such that these pure cases, increasingly rare nowadays, leave out the great majority of the intermediate strata. While a business enterprise's service personnel may have considerably expanded, it is clear that not only the typists but a good number of employees placed higher up in these departments play no role of their own in the system of coercion and constraints that their departments help to impose upon the company. Conversely, when a research department or a department that performs "studies" for the company is developed, a chain of command is set up there, too, for a good number of people in such departments will have as their function the management of the other people's work.

More generally, it is impossible for the bureaucracy—and here is one more expression of the contradiction it experiences—to separate entirely the two work requirements, of "knowledge" or "technical expertise," on the one hand, and of "managerial ability," on the other. True, the logic of the system would want only those capable of "handling the men" to participate in the managerial chain of command, but the logic of reality requires that those who do a job know something about it—and the system can never become entirely unstuck from reality. This is why the intermediate strata are populated with people who combine a professional qualification with the exercise of managerial functions. For some of these people, the problem of how to manage in a way other than through manipulation and coercion crops up daily. Ambiguity vanishes when one reaches the layer of those who really are directors. These are the people for whose interests everything

ultimately functions. They make the important decisions. They reactivate and stimulate the workings of the system, which would otherwise tend to become bogged down in its own inertia. They take the initiative for plugging the leaks [*brèches*] during moments of crisis.

This definition is not of the same nature as the simple criteria previously adopted to characterize classes. The question today, however, is not to get wrapped up in how to define the concept of class: it is to understand and to show that bureaucratization does not diminish society's divisions but on the contrary aggravates them (by complicating them), that the system functions in the interests of a small minority at the top, that hierarchization does not suppress and never will suppress people's struggle against the ruling minority and its rules, that laboring people (whether they be workers, clerical staff, or engineers) will not be able to free themselves from oppression, from alienation, and from exploitation unless they overthrow this system by eliminating hierarchy and by instaurating their collective and egalitarian management of production. The revolution will come into being the day the immense majority of the laboring people who populate the bureaucratic pyramid will attack this pyramid and the small minority who rule it. And it will not occur a day sooner. In the meantime, the only differentiation of genuinely practical importance is the one that exists at almost all levels of the pyramid (save at the very top, obviously) between those who *accept* the system and those who, in the everyday reality of production, *combat* it.

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19. We already have defined elsewhere the profound contradiction of this society.[12] Briefly speaking, it resides in the fact that capitalism (and this reaches its point of paroxysm under bureaucratic capitalism) is obliged to try to realize simultaneously the exclusion and the participation of people in their activities, that people are forced to make the system run half the time *against* its rules and therefore in struggle against it. This fundamental contradiction is constantly appearing at the junction of the process of direction with the process of execution, this being, as a matter of fact, the *social* moment of production par excellence. And it is to be found again, in an indefinite number of refracted forms, within the process of direction itself, where it renders the bureaucracy's functioning irrational from the root up. If this contradiction can be analyzed in a particularly clear-cut fashion in the *labor* process, that central manifestation of human activity found in modern Western societies, it is to be found again under other forms, transposed to a greater or lesser degree, in all spheres of social activity, whether one is dealing with political life, sexual and family life (where people are more or less obliged to conform to norms they no longer interiorize), or cultural life.

20. The crisis of capitalist production, which is only the flip side of this contradiction, already has been analyzed in *S. ou B.*,[13] along with the crises of political and other kinds of organizations and institutions. These analyses must be complemented by an analysis of the crisis in values and in social life as such, and ultimately by an analysis of the crisis in the very personality of modern man, a result of the contradictory situations with which he must constantly grapple in his work and in his private life. This personality crisis also results from the collapse of values in the most profound sense of the term, namely, the fact that without values no cul-

ture is able to structure personalities adequate to it (i.e., to make the culture function, if only as the exploited).

Yet, our analysis of the crisis of production did not show that in this system of production there was only alienation. On the contrary, it has made clear that production occurred only to the extent that the producers constantly have struggled against this alienation. Likewise, our analysis of the crisis of capitalist culture in the broadest sense, and of the corresponding human personality, will take as its starting point the quite obvious fact that society is not and cannot be simply a "society without culture." Alongside the debris of the old culture are to be found positive (but ever ambiguous) elements created through the evolution of history. Above all, we find the permanent effort of people to live their lives, to give their lives a meaning in an era where nothing is certain any longer and where, in any case, nothing from without is accepted at face value. In the course of this effort there tends to be realized for the first time in the history of humanity people's aspiration for autonomy. For that very reason, this effort is just as important for the preparation of the socialist revolution as are the analogous manifestations in the domain of production.

21. The fundamental contradiction of capitalism and the multiple processes of conflict and irrationality in which its ramifications are brought out express themselves, and will express themselves so long as this society exists, through "crises" of one kind or another, breakdowns in the regular functioning of the system. These crises can open the way to revolutionary periods if the laboring masses are combative enough to put the capitalist system into question and conscious enough to be able to knock it down and to organize on its ruins a new society. The very functioning of capitalism therefore guarantees that there always will be "revolutionary opportunities." It does not, however, guarantee their outcome, which can depend upon nothing other than the masses' level of consciousness and their degree of autonomy. There is no "objective" dynamic guaranteeing socialism, and to say that one can exist is a contradiction in terms. All objective dynamics that can be detected in contemporary society are thoroughly ambiguous, as we have shown elsewhere.[14]

The only dynamic to which one can, and should, give the meaning of a dialectical progression toward revolution is the *historical* dialectic of the struggle of social groups, first of the proletariat in the strict sense of the term, and today more generally laboring people earning wages or salaries. The signification of this dialectic is that, through their struggle, those who are exploited transform reality as well as themselves, so that when the struggle resumes it can occur only at a higher level. This alone is the revolutionary perspective, and the search for another type of revolutionary perspective, even by those who condemn a mechanistic approach, proves that the true signification of their condemnation of such an approach has not really been understood. The ripening [*maturation*] of the conditions for socialism can never be an objective ripening (because no fact has signification outside human activity of one sort or another, and the will to read the certainty of the revolution in simple facts is no less absurd than the will to read it in the stars). Nor can it be a subjective ripening in a psychological sense (laboring people today do not have as explicitly present in their minds history and its lessons, far from it; the main lesson of history is, as Hegel said, that there are no lessons of history, since history

is always new). It is a historical process of maturation, that is, the accumulation of objective conditions for an adequate consciousness. This accumulation is itself the product of class action and the action of social groups. It cannot acquire its meaning, however, except through its resumption in a new consciousness and in new activity, which is not governed by "laws" and which, while being probable, never is *fated.*

22. The present era remains within this perspective. The victory of reformism as well as of bureaucratism signifies that if laboring people are to undertake large-scale struggles, they will be able to do so only by combatting reformism and bureaucracy. The bureaucratization of society poses in an explicit way the social problem as one of the *management* of society: management by whom, to what ends, by what means? The rise in standards of consumption will tend to lessen the effectiveness of consumption as a substitute in people's lives, as motive and as justification for what is already called in the United States the "rat race."[15] Inasmuch as "economic" problems in the narrow sense are diminishing in importance, the interests and preoccupations of laboring people will be able to turn toward the real problems of life in modern society: toward working conditions and the organization of the workplace, toward the very *meaning* of work under present conditions, toward the other aspects of social organization and of people's lives.

To these points[16] we must add another that is just as important. The crisis of culture and of traditional values increasingly raises for individuals the problem of how to orient their concrete life both in the workplace and in all its other manifestations (relationships between man and woman, between adults and children, with other social groups, with their neighborhood and immediate surroundings, even with "disinterested" activities), of its modes of being [*modalités*], but also, in the end, of its very *meaning*. Less and less can individuals resolve these problems simply by conforming to traditional and inherited ideas and roles—and even when they do conform, they no longer internalize them, that is, they no longer accept them as valid and unchallengeable—because these ideas and these roles, which are incompatible with present-day social reality as well as with the needs of individuals, are collapsing from within. The ruling bureaucracy tries to replace them by means of manipulation, mystification, and propaganda—but these synthetic products cannot, any more than any other ones, resist next year's fashions, they can serve only as the basis for fleeting, external types of conformism. To an increasing degree, individuals are obliged to invent new responses to their problems. In doing so, not only do they manifest their tendency toward autonomy, but at the same time they tend to embody this autonomy, in their behavior and in their relationships with others. More and more, one's actions are set on the idea that a relationship between human beings can be founded only on the recognition by each of the freedom and responsibility of the other in the conduct of his life. If one takes seriously the character of the revolution as total, if one understands that workers' management does not signify only a certain type of machinery but also a certain type of people, then it also must be recognized that this tendency is just as important as an index of the revolution as the workers' tendency to combat the bureaucratic management of the business enterprise—even if we do not yet see the collective manifestations of this former tendency, nor how it could lead to organized activities.

III. The End of the Traditional Workers' Movement: A Balance Sheet

23. Today one cannot act or think as a revolutionary without becoming deeply and totally conscious of this fact: the result of the transformations of capitalism and of the degeneration of the organized workers' movement has been that its traditional organizational forms, its traditional forms of action, its traditional preoccupations, ideas, and very vocabulary no longer have any value, or even have only a negative value. As [Daniel] Mothé has written, when discussing the actual reality of this movement for workers, " . . . even the Roman Empire, when it disappeared, left behind it ruins; the workers' movement is leaving behind only refuse."[17]

To become aware of this fact means to be done once and for all with the idea that, consciously or unconsciously, still dominates many people's attitudes, namely, that today's parties and trade unions—and all that goes with them (ideas, demands, etc.)—represent merely a screen interposed between a proletariat, ever and inalterably revolutionary in itself, and its class objectives, or a casting mold that distorts the form of workers' activities but does not modify their substance. The degeneration of the workers' movement has not only entailed the appearance of a bureaucratic stratum at the summit of these organizations, it has affected *all* its manifestions. This process of degeneration is due neither to chance nor simply to the "outside" influence of capitalism, but expresses just as much the proletariat's reality during an entire historic phase, for the proletariat is not and cannot be unfamiliar with what happens to it, let alone what it does.[18]

To speak of the demise of the traditional workers' movement means to understand that a historical period is coming to a close, dragging with it into the nothingness of the past the near-totality of forms and contents it had produced to embody laboring people's struggle for liberation. Just as there will be a renewal of struggles against capitalist society only to the extent that laboring people will make a tabula rasa of the residues of their own past activity that hinder the rebirth of these struggles, so there can be a renewal of the activity of revolutionaries only to the extent that the corpses have been properly and definitively buried.

24. The workers' traditional forms of organization were the trade union and the party. What is a union today? It is a cog in capitalist society, indispensable for its "smooth" functioning both at the level of production and at the level of distribution of the social product. (That it plays an ambiguous role in this regard does not suffice to distinguish it in any essential way from other institutions in established society; that the character of trade unions does not forbid revolutionary militants from belonging to it is also another matter.) This is what they are *necessarily,* and to seek to restore trade unions to their original purity is to live in a dream world under the pretext of being realistic.

What is a political party today (a "working-class" one, I mean)? A managerial organ of capitalist society, a means for enrolling the masses into this society; when it is "in power," it differs in no way from bourgeois parties except that it helps accelerate the evolution of capitalism toward its bureaucratic form and that it sometimes gives capitalism a more overtly totalitarian twist; in any case, such "working-class" parties organize repression of the exploited and of the colonial masses as well as, if not better than, its rivals. This is what they are necessarily, and there is no

way these parties can be reformed. An abyss separates what we mean by revolutionary organization from the traditional party.

In both the case of the labor union and that of the "working-class" political party, our critique[19] merely renders explicit the critique to which history itself has subjected these two institutions. And like history itself, it has offered not just a critique of events, but also a critique of contents and forms of people's action over an entire period. It is not just *these* parties and *these* unions that are dead as institutions for working-class struggle, but The Party and The Union. Not only is it utopian to wish to reform them, to straighten them out, or to constitute new ones that would miraculously escape the fate of the old ones; it is false to want to find for them in the new period exact equivalents, replacements under "new" forms that would still have the same old functions.

25. Traditional "minimum" demands were first of all economic demands. Such economic demands not only coincided with workers' interests but were supposed to undermine the capitalist system. We have already shown[20] that steady wage increases are the condition for the expansion of the capitalist system and ultimately for its "health," even if capitalists do not always understand this. (It is another thing if the capitalists' resistance to such increases can, under certain completely exceptional circumstances, become the point of departure for conflicts that go beyond the level of economic issues.)

Then there were political demands. In the great tradition of the real workers' movement (and in Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, if not for the ultraleft sects), these consisted in demanding and defending "democratic rights" and the extension of such rights, in making use of parliamentary institutions, and in demanding the right to manage municipal affairs. The justification for these demands were (a) that these rights were necessary to the development of the workers' movement; (b) that the bourgeoisie could not grant them or tolerate in the long run their exercise, since it was "choking on its own legality." Now, we have seen the system accommodate itself very well to its pseudodemocracy. "Rights" do not mean very much for the workers' movement since they have been canceled out by the bureaucratization of "working-class" organizations themselves. We must add that these "rights" have been achieved in almost all cases in modern Western societies, and that challenges to these rights by the ruling strata, when they do take place, stir up large-scale reactions on the part of the populace only quite seldom. As for the so-called transitional demands put forth by Trotsky, we have shown well enough their false and illusory character, so we need not return to that issue here.

Finally, it must be stated and repeated that the central points of traditional "maximum" demands (which remains alive in the minds of the overwhelming majority of people) were nationalization and economic planning. We have shown that these were organically the program of the bureaucracy (the expression, "workers' management," is mentioned only once in passing in the *Theses, Resolutions, and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, without being elaborated at all or even defined, never to appear again).

26. The traditional forms of action (we are not talking here about armed insurrection, which does not take place every day or even every year) basically were the strike and the mass demonstration.

What is the strike today—not the idea of the strike, but striking in its actual social reality? Basically there are mass strikes, controlled and marshaled by trade unions into confrontations whose unfolding is set like a theater piece (whatever the sacrifices such strikes may demand of the mass of workers). Or else there are "symbolic" strikes lasting fifteen minutes, an hour, etc.; these too are controlled and marshaled from above. The only cases in which strikes go beyond the institutionalized procedure that is now part of union-management negotiations are the wildcat strikes in England and the United States, precisely because they put this procedure into question, either in its form or in its content. There are also, we should add, a few cases of strikes limited to one company or to one department of a company; for this very reason, the grass roots are able to play a more active role in them.

As for mass demonstrations, it is better not even to mention them.

What must be understood in these two cases is that, in their reality, these forms of action are necessarily and indissociably linked both to the organizations that control them and to the objectives these organizations pursue. It is true, for example, that the idea of the big strike still remains valid "in itself," and that one can imagine a process in which "real" strike committees would be elected (and not appointed from above), would put forward the "real" demands of the workers, would remain under their control, etc. In relation to the real world today, however, such speculations are empty and gratuitous. To achieve this on a larger scale than that of a single enterprise or shop within one enterprise would require both a deep break between workers and the union bureaucracy and the masses' capacity to set up autonomous organs and to formulate demands that would cut through the present context of reformism. In short, it would signify that society was entering into a revolutionary period. The enormous difficulties that the Belgian strikes of 1960–61 encountered, as well as their ultimate failure, dramatically highlight the problem.

27. This same irreversible historical wear and tear has had its effect on the traditional vocabulary of the workers' movement as well as on what can be called its *idées-forces*. If we take into account the real way words are used in society, their signification for people and not their dictionary definitions, a communist is today a member of the Communist party, that is all; socialism is the type of regime that exists in the USSR and other similar countries; the proletariat is a term used by no one outside a few extreme left-wing sects, and so on. Words have their historical destiny, and whatever difficulties this creates for us (difficulties that are resolved only in appearance when we write "communist" in quotation marks), we should understand that we cannot play in relation to this language the role of a revolutionary counterpart of the *Academie Française*, more conservative than the real one, as we would be rejecting the living meaning of words in their everyday social usage while maintaining, for example, that "sensible" means "pertaining to the mode of knowing" rather than "reasonable"[21] or that a communist is someone in favor of a society in which everyone gives according to his ability and receives according to his needs, and not a supporter of Maurice Thorez.[22]

As for the *idées-forces* of the workers' movement, no one outside a few sects knows any longer, even vaguely, what "social revolution," for example, means. At most one thinks of a civil war. The "abolition of the wages system," once the top priority in labor-union programs, no longer signifies anything to anyone. The last manifesta-

tions of actual internationalism date from the Spanish Civil War (not that opportunities have been lacking since then). The very idea of working-class unity or, more generally, unity of the entire population of laboring people (inasmuch as they basically share the same interests, which indeed are radically opposed to those of the ruling strata) hardly manifests itself at all in reality (apart from solidarity strikes and the "blacking" of struck companies that take place in England). As background to all this there is the collapse of traditional theoretical conceptions and ideology, to which we will not here return.

28. At the same time that we are witnessing the irreversible bankruptcy of the forms that are characteristic of the traditional movement, we have witnessed, we are witnessing, and we will continue to witness the birth, rebirth, or resumption of new forms that, to the best of our ability to judge at the present time, are pointing to the direction the revolutionary process will take in the future. These new forms should guide us in our present thinking and action. The Hungarian Workers' Councils, their demands concerning the management of production, the abolition of [externally prescribed work] norms, and so on; the shop stewards' movement in England and wildcat strikes in the United States; demands concerning working conditions in the most general sense and those directed against hierarchy, which various categories of workers in several countries are putting forward, almost always *against* the unions: these are the new forms that ought to be the certain and positive points of departure in our effort to reconstruct a revolutionary movement. We have made an extensive analysis of these movements in *S. ou B.*, and this analysis remains valid (even if it must be reexamined and developed further). These insights, however, will not allow our reflections and our action to become truly fruitful unless we fully come to understand how they represent a *rupture*, certainly not with the high points of past revolutions, but with the everyday historical reality of the traditional movement today, and unless we take them not as amendments or additions to past forms, but as new bases upon which we must continue to reflect and to act, together with what our analysis and our renewed critique of established society teach us.

29. Present conditions allow us, therefore, to deepen and to enlarge both the idea of socialism and its bases in social reality. This claim seems to be in direct conflict with the total disappearance of the revolutionary socialist movement and of political activity on the part of laboring people. And this opposition is not merely apparent. It is real, and it constitutes the central problem of our age. The workers' movement has been integrated into official society; its institutions (parties, unions) have become those of official society. Moreover, laboring people have in fact abandoned all political and sometimes even trade-union activity. This privatization of the working class and even of all other social strata is the combined result of two factors: on the one hand, the bureaucratization of parties and unions distances these organizations from the mass of laboring people; on the other, rising living standards and the massive proliferation of new types of consumer objects and new consumer life-styles provide them with the substitute for and the simulacrum of reasons for living. This phase is neither superficial nor accidental. It expresses one possible destiny of present-day society. If the term *barbarism* has a meaning today, it is neither fascism nor poverty nor a return to the Stone Age. It is precisely this "air-conditioned night-

mare," consumption for the sake of consumption in private life, organization for the sake of organization in collective life, as well as their corollaries: privatization, withdrawal, and apathy as regards matters shared in common, and dehumanization of social relationships. This process is well under way in industrialized countries, but it also engenders its own opposites. People have abandoned bureaucratized institutions, and ultimately they enter into opposition against them. The race after "ever higher" levels of consumption and "ever newer" consumer objects sooner or later condemns itself by its very absurdity. Those elements that may allow a raising of consciousness, socialist activity, and, in the last analysis, revolution have not disappeared, but on the contrary are proliferating in contemporary society. Each laboring person can observe the anarchy and incoherencies that characterize the ruling classes and their system in their management of the grand affairs of society. And in his daily existence—and in the first place, in his work—he lives the absurdity of a system that tries to reduce him to the status of an automaton but is obliged to call upon his inventiveness and his initiative to correct its own mistakes.

Here lies the fundamental contradiction we have analyzed, the decrepitude and the crisis of all traditional forms of organization and life. Here too we find people's aspirations for autonomy, such as these are manifested in their concrete existence. Here, finally, we discover laboring people constantly struggling in an informal way against the bureaucratic management of production, the movements and just demands we mentioned in point 28. Thus the elements of a socialist solution continue being produced, even if they are hidden underground, deformed, or mutilated by the functioning of bureaucratic society.

Moreover, this society does not succeed in rationalizing its operation (not even from its own point of view). It is doomed to go on producing "crises," which, as accidental as they may appear to be each time they occur, are nonetheless inevitable, and never fail to raise before humanity the totality of its problems. These two elements provide the necessary and sufficient basis upon which a revolutionary perspective and project can be founded. It is a vain mystification to seek another perspective, to try to deduce the revolution, to provide a "proof" for it, or to describe the way in which the conjunction of these two elements (the conscious revolt of the masses and the temporary inability of the established system to go on functioning) will take place and lead to revolution. Besides, no description of this kind ever existed in classical Marxism, except for the passage at the end of the chapter entitled "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" in *Capital*. Moreover, this passage is theoretically false, for no revolution that ever has actually taken place in history took place in this way. Every revolution that has occurred began as an unforeseeable "accident" of the system, setting off an explosion of mass activity. (Later on, the historians—whether Marxist or not—who never have been able to foresee anything, but are always very wise after the fact, furnish us with a posteriori explanations for such explosions, explanations that explain nothing at all.)

A long time ago we wrote that it is not a matter of deducing the revolution, but of making it. And the only factor making a connection between these two elements about which *we*, as revolutionaries, can speak is our own activity, the activity of a revolutionary organization. Of course, such activity does not constitute a "guarantee" of any sort, but it is the only factor dependent on us that can increase the like-

lihood that the innumerable individual and collective revolts taking place throughout society will be able to respond to each other and unite among themselves, take on the same meaning, explicitly aim at the radical reconstruction of society, and finally transform what is at the beginning never anything other than "just another crisis of the system" into a revolutionary crisis. In this sense, the unification of the two elements of the revolutionary perspective can take place only through our activity and by means of the concrete content of our orientation.

IV. Elements for a New Orientation[23]

30. As an organized movement, the revolutionary movement must be rebuilt totally. This reconstruction will find a solid base in the development of working-class experience, but it presupposes a radical rupture with present-day organizations, their ideology, their mentality, their methods, and their actions. Everything that has existed and exists today in instituted form in the labor movement—parties, unions, etc.—is irremediably and irrevocably finished, rotten, integrated into exploiting society. There can be no miraculous solutions. Everything must be remade at the cost of a long and patient labor. Everything must be started over again [*recommencer*], but starting from the immense experience of a century of working-class struggles and with laboring people, who find themselves closer than ever to genuine solutions.

31. Equivocations about the socialist program created by degenerated "working-class" organizations (whether Stalinist or reformist) must be destroyed down to their very roots. The idea that socialism coincides in any way with the nationalization of the means of production or with planning, that it basically aims at—or that people ought to aim at—increasing production and consumption are ideas that must be mercilessly denounced. Their basic identity with the underlying orientation of capitalism must be repeatedly shown.

Workers' management of production and society and the power of workers' councils as the necessary form of socialism should be demonstrated and illustrated, starting from recent historical experience. The basic content of socialism is the restitution of people's domination over their own lives; the transformation of work from an absurd form of breadwinning into the free deployment of the creative forces of individuals and groups; the constitution of integrated human communities; the unification of people's culture and lives. This content should not be embarrassingly hidden as some kind of speculation about an indeterminate future, but rather put forward as the sole response to the problems that today torment and stifle people and society. The socialist program ought to be presented for what it is: a program for the humanization of work and of society. It ought to be shouted from the rooftops that socialism is not a backyard of leisure attached to the industrial prison, or transistors for the prisoners, but the destruction of the industrial prison itself.

32. Revolutionary criticism of society must switch its axis. In the first place, it should denounce in all its forms the inhuman and absurd character of work today. It should unveil the arbitrariness and monstrosity of hierarchy in production and in society, its lack of justification, the tremendous wastefulness and strife it generates, the incompetency of those who rule, the contradictions and irrationality of bureaucratic management of each enterprise, of the economy, of the State, and of

society. It ought to show that, whatever the rise in the "standard of living," the problem of people's needs is not resolved even in the richest of societies, that consumption in the capitalist mode is full of contradictions and ultimately absurd. Finally, it ought to broaden itself to encompass all aspects of life, to denounce the disintegration of communities, the dehumanization of relations between individuals, the content and methods of capitalist education, the monstrousness of modern cities, and the double oppression imposed upon women and youth.

33. The analysis of social reality today cannot and must not simply explain and denounce alienation. It must constantly show the *double reality* of every social activity under present-day conditions (which is but the expression of what we have defined above as the fundamental contradiction of the system), namely, that people's creativity and their struggle against alienation, at times individual, at times collective, necessarily manifest themselves in every domain, especially during the contemporary era (were this not so, there would never be a question of socialism).

We have attacked the absurd idea that the factory is *nothing but* a hard-labor camp. And we have shown that alienation can never be total (for then production would simply grind to a halt). Rather, production is dominated just as much by the tendency of the producers, both individually and collectively, to take on partially the management of production. Similarly, we must denounce the absurd idea that people's lives under capitalism consist of *nothing but* passivity toward capitalist manipulation and mystification (if this were so, we would be living in a world of zombies for whom the question of socialism would never arise). On the contrary, we must highlight and recognize the positive value of people's efforts (which are at once the cause and the effect of the collapse of traditional values and forms of living) to orient for themselves their own lives and their own attitudes in a period where nothing is certain any longer.

These efforts open up—no more, no less—an absolutely new phase in the history of humanity, and, insofar as they embody the aspiration for autonomy, they are a condition for socialism as essential as, if not more essential than, the development of technology. And we must also show the positive content the exercise of this autonomy often takes on, for instance in the growing transformation of the relations between the sexes or between parents and children in the family. This transformation contains within itself the recognition that the other person is or ought in the last analysis to be the master of his life and responsible for it. It is equally important to show the similar contents that appear in the most radical currents in contemporary culture (tendencies in psychoanalysis, sociology, and ethnology, for example), to the extent that these currents both complete the demolition of what remains of oppressive ideologies and are bound to spread within society.

34. Traditional organizations were based upon the idea that economic demands constituted the central problem confronting workers and that capitalism was incapable of satisfying these demands. This idea should be categorically repudiated since it corresponds to nothing in present-day reality. The revolutionary organization and the trade-union activity of revolutionary militants cannot be founded upon a game of outbidding others over economic demands, which the unions have more or less successfully defended and which are achievable within the capitalist system without major difficulties. The basis for permanent trade-union reformism is to be found in

the possibility of wage increases. This is also one of the conditions for their irreversible degeneration into bureaucratic organizations. Capitalism can survive only by granting wage increases. For this reason, bureaucratized, reformist trade unions are indispensable to it.

This does not mean that revolutionary militants necessarily ought to leave the unions or no longer interest themselves in economic demands. But neither of these two points retains the central importance they once were given.

35. The wage earner's humanity is less and less subject to attack by economic poverty that puts his physical existence into danger. It is more and more threatened by the nature and conditions of his work, by the oppression and alienation he suffers in the production process. Now, in this field there is not, and cannot be, lasting reform, but only a struggle with unstable results that are never fully established, for one cannot reduce alienation by 3 percent per annum. Nor is the organization of the production process ever free from the upheavals of technical change. In this field, too, the trade unions cooperate with management down the line. A key task for the revolutionary movement is to help workers organize their struggle against living and working conditions in the capitalist enterprise.

36. Exploitation in contemporary society more and more occurs under the form of inequality within the hierarchy. Respect for the value of hierarchy, which is sustained by "working-class" organizations, becomes the last ideological support for the whole system. The revolutionary movement ought to organize a systematic struggle against the ideology of hierarchy in all its forms, including the wage and salary hierarchy and the hierarchy among different jobs in each company.

This struggle can no longer continue, however, simply on the basis of an analysis of the respective situations of semiskilled machine operators and foremen within traditional industries. Such an analysis would have no grasp over the growing number of categories of laborers, to whom it would be false to present hierarchy as merely a veil of mystification covering over a reality in which all roles would be identical, save for those that involve the exercise of coercion. What we must show is that in the overwhelming majority of cases, differences in skills among laboring people result from the very functioning of a society that is unequal and hierarchized from the outset.

With each new generation, such a society constantly reproduces itself as a stratified society. We must show that it is not simply these differences in skill levels that determine where individuals are situated on the hierarchical pyramid; their situations are defined as much (and more and more so, as one moves up from one echelon to the next) by each individual's ability to remain afloat amidst the struggle between bureaucratic cliques and clans—an ability of no social value. In any case, we must show that it is only the collectivity of laboring people that can and should manage work in a rational manner, as to its general objectives and to its conditions. To the extent that certain technical aspects of work require a differentiation in people's responsibilities, we must show that those given positions of responsibility should remain under the control of the collectivity. We must show that in no case can there be a justification for any kind of wage differentials whatsoever, wage equality being a central plank of any socialist program. In this same context, it must be understood that laboring people's desire to improve their skills or to take on posts of responsibil-

ity does not always or necessarily express an aspiration to pass over to the other side of the class barrier. Indeed, to an increasing degree it expresses people's need to find some interest in their work. (It is another thing that this need cannot be satisfied within the present system just by getting a promotion, either. Nor is there any point in saying that such a solution remains purely personal and individualistic; it is no more so than that of individuals who raise their children the best they can, instead of just saying, "The problem is insoluble anyhow under the present system.")

37. In all struggles, the way in which a result is obtained is as important as, even more important than, what is obtained. Even with regard to immediate effectiveness, actions organized and directed by laboring people themselves are superior to actions decided and directed bureaucratically. But above all, these alone create the conditions for pushing the movement forward, for they alone teach laboring people how to manage their own affairs. The supreme criterion guiding the activity of the revolutionary movement ought to be the idea that when it intervenes, it aims not at replacing but at developing laboring people's initiative and autonomy.

38. Even when struggles in production reach a great intensity and attain a high level, the passage to the overall problem of society remains the hardest one for laboring people to make. In this field, therefore, the revolutionary movement has a key task to perform. This task must not be confused with sterile agitation about incidents in the "political life" of capitalism. It lies instead in showing that the system always operates against laboring people, that they cannot resolve their problems without abolishing capitalism and the bureaucracy and totally reconstructing society; that there is a profound and intimate similarity between their fate as producers in the workplace and their fate as people in society, in the sense that neither one nor the other can be modified without the division between a class of directors and a class of executants being suppressed. Only through long and patient work in this direction can the problem of how to mobilize laboring people around general questions be posed again in correct terms.

39. Experience has proved that internationalism is not an automatic product of working-class life. Formerly it had been developed into a real political factor by the actions of working-class organizations, but it disappeared when the latter degenerated and lapsed into chauvinism.

The revolutionary movement will have to struggle to help the proletariat reclimb the long path down which it has been descending for the past quarter century. It will have to breathe life back into the international solidarity of labor struggles and especially the solidarity of laboring people in imperialist countries with the struggles of colonized peoples.

40. The revolutionary movement must cease to appear as a political movement in the traditional sense of the term. Traditional politics is dead, and for good reasons. The population has abandoned it because it sees it for what it is in social reality: the activity of a stratum of professional mystifiers hovering around the state machinery and its appendages in order to penetrate into them or to take them over. The revolutionary movement ought to appear as a total movement concerned with everything that people do and are subject to in society, and above all with their real daily life.

41. The revolutionary movement ought therefore to cease being an organization

of specialists. It ought to become the place—the only place in present-day society outside the workplace—where a growing number of individuals relearn how to live a truly collective life, manage their own affairs, and realize and develop themselves while working in mutual recognition for a common objective [*projet*].

42. The propaganda and recruitment efforts of the revolutionary movement must take into account the transformations in the structure of capitalist society described above, as well as the generalization of its state of crisis. The revolutionary movement cannot address itself to manual laborers to the exclusion of almost everyone else, or pretend that everyone has been or ultimately is going to be transformed into a simple executant at the base of the bureaucratic pyramid. What really is the case, and what can serve as an adequate basis for propaganda and recruitment efforts, is that the great majority of individuals, whatever their qualifications or level of pay, have been integrated into a bureaucratically organized production process. They feel the alienation in their work as well as the absurdity of the system, and they tend to revolt against it. Similarly, the crisis of culture and the decomposition of values in capitalist society are driving large sections of intellectuals and students (whose numerical weight, indeed, is growing) toward a radical critique of the system.

In order to achieve unity in the struggles against the system and to make the collective management of production by laboring people a realizable goal, the role of these "new strata" will be fundamental. Indeed, it will be much more fundamental than was, for example, "unity with the poor peasantry" in Lenin's time, for, as such, the peasantry represented only a negative force, capable merely of destroying the old system, whereas the "new strata" have an essential, positive role to play in the socialist reconstruction of society.

The revolutionary movement alone can give a positive meaning and provide the positive outcome to the revolt of these strata against the system. And in return, the movement will be greatly enriched by them. Under the conditions of an exploitative society, the revolutionary movement alone can serve as the link between manual workers, "tertiary" employees, and intellectuals. Without this linkup there can be no victory for the revolution.

43. The rupture between generations and the youth revolt in modern society are not comparable to the "generational conflicts" of former times. Youth no longer oppose adults as part of a strategy to take their place in an accepted and established system. They reject this system. They no longer recognize its values. Contemporary society is losing its hold over the generations it produces. This rupture is especially brutal when it comes to politics.

On the one hand, the overwhelming majority of adult cadres and labor militants cannot regear themselves to the changing situation, no matter how hard they try or how sincere they may be. They mechanically repeat the lessons and phrases learned long ago, even though these ideas have become devoid of meaning. They remain attached to forms of action and organization that are in the process of collapsing. Conversely, traditional organizations are succeeding less and less in recruiting youth. In the eyes of young people, nothing separates these organizations from all the stupid, worm-eaten pomposity they meet when they come into the social world.

The revolutionary movement will be able to give a positive direction to the immense revolt of youth today. It will make of it the leaven for social transformation,

if it can find the new and genuine language for which youth is searching and if it can show young people an effective form of action and struggle against a world they reject.

44. The crisis and wearing down of the capitalist system today extends to all sectors of life. Its leaders tire themselves out trying to plug the leaks [*brèches*] in the system, without ever succeeding in doing so. In this society, the richest and most powerful the earth has ever known, people's dissatisfaction and their impotence in the face of their own creations are greater than ever.

Today capitalism may succeed in privatizing the laboring population, in driving them away from dealing with their social problems and from acting collectively. But this phase cannot last forever, if only because established society will put a stop to it first. Sooner or later, due to one of those inevitable "accidents" that takes place under the present system, the masses will enter into action again to change the conditions of their existence. The fate of this action will depend on the degree of consciousness, of initiative, of will, and of capacity for autonomy that laboring people will then exhibit.

But the development of this awareness and the consolidation of this autonomy depend to a decisive degree on the continuing work of a revolutionary organization. This organization must have a clear understanding of a century of working-class struggles. Above all, it must understand that both the end and the means of all revolutionary activity are the development of the conscious and autonomous action of laboring people. It must be capable of tracing out the perspective of a new human society for which it is worth living and dying. Finally, it must itself embody the example of a collective activity that people can both understand and dominate.

Notes

1. *S. ou B.*, 1 (March 1949), p. 4 (emphasis in the original). (Reprinted in *SB 1*, p. 134 [T/E: not available in English translation].)

2. "Prolétariat et organisation," in *S. ou B.*, 27 (April 1959), pp. 65–66, 80, and 87. (*PO I* is reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 144–48, 170–72, and 185 [T/E: now translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 202–3, 213–14, and 220].)

3. This opposition reached the point of paroxysm in "Le Mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne," *S. ou B.*, 31 (December 1960), 32 (April 1961), and 33 (December 1961) [T/E: *MRCM* is reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 47–203; the translation, "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" (*MCR*), appears in *PSW 2*, pp. 226–315], and in the ideas that, developed on the basis of that text, were formulated in the present article. The ultimate result was a scission within the group. The comrades who have separated themselves from us, among whom are P[ierre] Brune, J[ean-]F[rançois] Lyotard, and R. Maille, propose to continue publication of the monthly journal *Pouvoir Ouvrier* [T/E: *S. ou B.*'s popularized, roneotyped newsletter, *Workers' Power*]. The customary and logical thing would have been to discuss publicly the reasons for this scission, and the opposing theses. Unfortunately, that is not possible for us to do. This opposition has remained without any definable content, positive or even negative; to this day we know nothing about what those who reject our ideas want to put in their place, and just as little about what precisely they are opposed to. We therefore can only explain ourselves concerning our own positions and, for the rest, we can merely note once again the ideological and political sterility of conservativism. [See *MRCM/MCR*; T/E: see now the Postface to this article, chapter 7 in this volume.]

4. See *PO I*, in *S. ou B.*, 27 (April 1959), pp. 72–74 (reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 158–61 [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 207–9]).

5. See *MRCM*, *S. ou B.*, 32 (April 1961), pp. 101ff. [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 129ff., and translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, pp. 272ff.].

6. The ideas that follow have been developed in a number of texts published in *S. ou B.* See in partic-

ular the editorial, "Socialisme ou Barbarie," *S. ou B.*, 1 (March 1949) [T/E: *SB* is reprinted in *SB 1*, pp. 139–83; translated as "Socialism or Barbarism," in *PSW 1*, pp. 76–106]; "Les Rapports de production en Russie," *S. ou B.*, 2 (May 1949) [T/E: *RPR* is reprinted in *SB 1*, 205–81; translated as "The Relations of Production in Russia," in *PSW 1*, pp. 107–57]; "Sur le programme socialiste," *S. ou B.*, 10 (July 1952) [T/E: reprinted in *CS*, pp. 47–65; not translated for the present series]; "L'Expérience prolétarienne," *S. ou B.*, 11 (November 1952) [T/E: by Claude Lefort, reprinted in *Eléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* (Geneva: Droz, 1971, and Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 39–58 and 71–97, respectively]; "La Bureaucratie syndicale et les ouvriers," *S. ou B.*, 13 (January 1954) [T/E: by Daniel Mothé]; "Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 17 (July 1955), 22 (July 1957), and 23 (January 1958) [T/E: *CS I-III* are reprinted in *CS*, pp. 67–102 and 103–222, and *EMO 2*, pp. 9–88; translated as "On the Content of Socialism I," in *PSW 1*, pp. 290–309, and "II" and "III," in *PSW 2*, pp. 90–154 and 155–192]; "La Révolution en Pologne et en Hongrie," *S. ou B.*, 20 (December 1956) [T/E: Castoriadis is referring to a special section of this issue of *S. ou B.*, which included "Questions aux militants du P.C.F." (reprinted in *SB 2*, pp. 231–65, as "L'Insurrection hongroise: Questions aux militants du P.C.F."); Claude Lefort, "L'Insurrection hongroise" (reprinted in the 1971 edition of *Eléments*, pp. 191–220); Philippe Guillaume, "Comment ils se sont battus"; D. Mothé, "Chez Renault on parle de la Hongrie"; and Pierre Chaulieu (Cornelius Castoriadis), "La Révolution prolétarienne contre la bureaucratie" (*RPB*, reprinted in *SB 2*, pp. 267–337; translated as "The Proletarian Revolution against the Bureaucracy" [*PRAB*], in *PSW 2*, pp. 57–89)]; "L'Usine et la gestion ouvrière," *S. ou B.*, 22 (July 1957) [T/E: by Daniel Mothé]; *PO I* and *PO II* (*S. ou B.*, 28 [July 1959; T/E: *PO II* has not been translated for the present series]); "Les Ouvriers et la culture," *S. ou B.*, 30 (April 1960) [T/E: by Daniel Mothé]; and *MRCM/MCR*.

7. It is in a spirit of profound fidelity to this, the most important aspect of Marx's doctrine, that Lukács devoted the main part of *History and Class Consciousness* to an analysis of reification.

8. Several of the ideas summarized below have been developed or demonstrated in *MRCM/MCR*.

9. *S. ou B.*, 1–8. [T/E: *The American Worker*, which includes "The American Worker" by Paul Romano and "The Reconstruction of Society" by Ria Stone (Grace [Lee] Boggs), was originally published in English by *Correspondence* in 1947; a 1974 reprint is still available from Bewick in Detroit.]

10. Solidarity text footnote: By 1971 the proportion had declined to 21 percent. (Figures calculated from *Manpower Report of the President* [Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1973], pp. 188–89; and *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* [1963; T/E: this last date presumably should read 1973]).

11. See "Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 22 (July 1957), pp. 56–58 [T/E: reprinted as *CS II* in *CS*, pp. 191–94; translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 137–39], and *MRCM* in *S. ou B.*, 32 (April 1961), pp. 94–99 [T/E: reprinted in *CMR*, pp. 120–27; translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, pp. 267–71].

12. See "Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 23 (January 1958), pp. 84ff. (reprinted as *CS III* in *EMO 2*, pp. 15ff. [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 158ff.]), and *MRCM*, in *S. ou B.*, 32 (April 1961), pp. 84ff. [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 105ff.; translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, pp. 258ff.].

13. See Paul Romano and Ria Stone, "L'Ouvrier américain," *S. ou B.*, 1–8 [T/E: see note 9 above for the original English-language version]; D[aniel] Mothé, "L'Usine et la gestion ouvrière," *S. ou B.*, 22 (July 1957); R[oger] Berthier, "Une expérience d'organisation ouvrière," *S. ou B.*, 20 (December 1956); and *CS III*.

14. See *MRCM*, in *S. ou B.*, 33 (December 1961), pp. 77–78 [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 177–78; translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, p. 299].

15. T/E: Castoriadis uses the French phrase "la course de rats" in quotation marks, followed by the English phrase, "rat race," in parentheses and italics.

16. Developed in *MRCM*, *S. ou B.*, 33 (December 1961), pp. 79–81 [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 181–84; translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, pp. 301–3].

17. "Les Ouvriers et la culture," *S. ou B.*, 30 (April 1960), p. 37.

18. See *PO I*, in *S. ou B.*, 27 (April 1959), pp. 72–74; reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 158–61 [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 207–9].

19. See *PO I*, *S. ou B.*, 27 (April 1959), pp. 63–74, reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 141–61 [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 201–9].

20. See *MRCM*, *S. ou B.*, 31 (December 1960), pp. 72–73 [T/E: reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 88–89; translated as *MCR* in *PSW 2*, pp. 249–50].

21. T/E: We have followed the Solidarity text here, beginning with the word "sensible." The accompanying footnote reads, "This is an English adaptation of Cardan's [i.e., Castoriadis's] text. The original

stated, ' . . . qui refuserait le sens vivant des mots dans l'usage social et insisterait qu'étonner signifie "faire trembler par une violente commotion" et non "surprendre" . . . ' (Solidarity footnote.)" The reprinted French text, we might also note, replaced "insisterait." with "maintiendrait."

22. T/E: Maurice Thorez (1900–64) was general secretary of the French Communist party at the time.

23. T/E: This fourth and final section of *RR*, "Elements for a New Orientation," is an almost verbatim restatement of the eighth and final section of *MRCM/MCR*, "For a Modern Revolutionary Movement," with a few slight, but quite significant, alterations. Points 30–32 in *RR* correspond to points 1–3 in *MRCM/MCR*. In the first sentence of point 30, the phrase "from rock bottom" (*à partier de zéro*) becomes "totally"; at the end of this first point, "proletariat" becomes "laboring people" (our preferred rendering of *travailleurs* in this third volume). In point 32, the word "total" has been eliminated twice: before "absence" and before "incapacity." Point 33 is a completely new addition. Points 34 and 35 correspond exactly to points 4 and 5. Point 36 differs slightly in its first sentence from point 6, as can be seen from a comparison of the two texts, and the additional two paragraphs contain entirely new material of great significance. Points 37–41 correspond exactly to points 7–11, except that the phrase "what it really is" has been dropped from the last sentence of point 10. Point 42 corresponds in part to point 12. The phrase "described above" is added in the first sentence, and the discussion of directors and executants is replaced by the sentence and a half from "The revolutionary movement cannot address itself" to "the great," and the second half of the second sentence also modifies the original statement about executants and compartmentalized work. The original text from point 12 then resumes, with an addition of "against the system" after "the revolt of these strata." Finally, point 43 corresponds to the first part of point 13, and point 44 is a verbatim restatement of the rest of point 13.

4
Sexual Education in the USSR

In 1959 a book written by an eminent physician, Dr. T. S. Atarov, "Meritorious Medical Doctor of the Russian Socialist Republic," was published in Moscow. It has become the most sought-after title in the USSR. The book, whose hundred thousand copies were printed and sold in a few days, bears an ambitious title: *The Problems of Sexual Education.*

After a "Marxist" introduction on the subject containing long quotations from Marx and Engels on woman's servitude in bourgeois society, the author declares that the Russian Revolution has abolished quite a number of ills in this domain, including, among others, prostitution, for which, he says, "there no longer exists any social basis." Monogamy has been preserved, but possesses a different meaning in Soviet society. "It nevertheless would be an error to think that the transition is complete . . . Even today there subsist some old ideological remnants." Many men, he says, deceive their wives without remorse; many young people have premarital relations without feeling guilty. What is even more serious, some of these youths tend to reduce their relations with the opposite sex to a pure satisfaction of their physical needs, without spiritual or moral relations.

A few of these "law breakers" go so far as to express their attitude in "philosophical" terms. They assert that the promiscuity in which they are engaged is an inevitable substitute for the prostitution of bygone days; they declare too that life in society demands a certain freedom in questions of sex, freedom being "biologically natural," whereas monogamy represses man's drives.

This attitude, Dr. Atarov affirms, is contrary to Lenin's ideas. For the latter, "free

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love" was not at all a solution in a well-organized socialist society. It is equally false, he says, that sexual license is an inevitable substitute for prostitution. In bourgeois countries there is both one as well as the other. Under socialism, no need for either the one or the other.

In chapter 1, the author endeavors to find a happy and harmonious solution that would combine "freedom and discipline." And he arrives at the following criterion: that "harmonious conduct is achieved when the personal desires of the individual coincide with the interests of society in general" (though he does not cite Immanuel Kant at any point).

In chapter 2, the author insists upon the difference between puberty and sexual maturity and counsels parents on the ways in which they can help adolescents to get through these difficult years. Apropos of menstruation, he declares that in no case should cotton or gauze be introduced into the vagina, as so many women wrongly do. The external organs must be washed twice every day with hot boiled water.

Another complex problem is that of masturbation. "Under Soviet conditions masturbation is no longer the mass phenomenon it was in the past, but it subsists." Various factors favor its continuance: clothes that are too close-fitting in the nether regions can awaken sensual feelings by means of a constant friction on the genital organs. Other causes of masturbation: boys' bad habits, such as keeping their hands in the pockets of their pants or under the covers, laying flat out on one's stomach or tickling each other under the arms or on the chest, etc. Constipation and a full bladder tend to encourage masturbation. Reading exciting books and contemplating the sexual life of animals also lead to masturbation, as does a sedentary life, isolation from the collectivity, and, need it be said, alcohol.

For Dr. Atarov, there is not a shadow of a doubt that masturbation has a bad effect on the nervous system. The adolescent becomes irritable and apathetic, tires quickly, and is indifferent to physical or intellectual work. He also offers a series of suggestions for combatting this dangerous evil: regular meals, exercise, walking, sports, physical training, in short everything that deflects the child's attention from sexual preoccupations. Sleeping habits are very important in this regard: having a hard bed is essential. It is very important that the child or adolescent not be able to observe the sexual life of animals and that all tendencies toward using foul words be nipped in the bud.

Parents ought to be on the lookout so that their child will avoid the bad influences of schoolmates, exciting games, books, and films. They themselves will have to avoid gestures that might stimulate the genital organs of their children: small children in particular ought not to be carried in such a manner that their sexual organs might be constantly rubbing against anything. Caresses on the chest or stomach are to be proscribed, for they inevitably awaken sensual feelings; the parents who give such caresses do much harm to their children. This kind of behavior indeed indicates the very low cultural level of the parents.

Likewise, Dr. Atarov declares, young people ought to be prevented from engaging in certain types of activity: they ought not to be waiters or waitresses in cafés, restaurants, or bars. The atmosphere of these places, with their constant comings

and goings of all sorts of people, is harmful and encourages youths to launch into premarital relations. Young unmarried persons ought not to work in such locales.

In chapter 3, "The Moral Education of the Young," Dr. Atarov insists again upon the difference between puberty and sexual maturity. Certain youths do not understand the distinction, he says, and from the moment there is sexual desire, they come to the erroneous conclusion that this desire must be satisfied, that chastity is bad and contrary to laws of biology. This false view justifies in their eyes the onset of a premature sexual life. Medical science, says Dr. Atarov, completely rejects this theory. No illness was ever caused by chastity, which is completely harmless, not only for the young but also for adults. The people who practice chastity never complain of any ill feelings; on the contrary, they are full of energy and creative power. Conversely, sexual promiscuity often leads to premature aging and impotence.

Chapter 4 is devoted to extramarital relations, which are severely condemned by Dr. Atarov, who cites cases to back himself up. Here are two of them:

1. *Boris*, lathe-operator, twenty years old. Has no secondary education. When, at age fifteen, he took a factory job, his parents "did not protest" (*sic*!).

Boris was a good worker, well regarded by his bosses (re-*sic*). But his private life was absolutely disordered.

One night at a dance he met a young girl. They rapidly became friends and, two or three days later, "intimacy" occurred. Boris did not even bother to ask her her name, but he was eloquent enough to persuade her to surrender to him her charms. The relationship was not to last: in less than a month, Boris abandoned the young girl.

What should be emphasized in this sad story, according to Dr. Atarov, is not only Boris's attitude, but the girl's unbounded confidence; she knew not how to resist the insolent advances of this chance encounter. The parents of the young girl and the school she attended are equally responsible for what happened. As for Boris, his attitude hardly will bring him joy. He condemns himself in this way to solitude. He never will experience the joys of family life, and ultimately he will contract a venereal disease (!).

2. *Peter*, student, twenty-six years old, was living with a young girl. One day while on vacation he met another young girl. They became "intimate" without knowing each other's respective first names. When he came home, he infected the girl with whom he was living with a venereal disease contracted during his vacation fling. This Don Juan attitude is disgusting. In spite of everything, Peter is an excellent student and his comrades think he is the greatest.

In this chapter we also find the following statement:

> When a young person thinks of marrying, the parents ought not to remain neutral. Soviet marriage is not just an individual matter, but an affair for society and the State. The people who consider marriage a temporary amusement commit a crime against socialist morality.

In chapter 5, Dr. Atarov treats particular problems, such as unrequited love.

> Unrequited love ought not to be considered a living tragedy. In socialist society, in which public service is the essential thing, and provided that the one in love has enough internal discipline, he ought to be able to over-

> come his unhappiness. *Work* and the moral support of his comrades ought to be of the greatest aid to him.

One cannot do better, by way of conclusion, than to cite this sentence of Dr. Atarov's, which sums up very well the spirit of his book:

> The law cannot concern itself with all cases of immoral conduct, but the pressure of public opinion ought to play an active role in the struggle against all forms of immoral conduct.

Can one wonder that most of Russian production in matters literary is a sort of Paul Bourget[1] (where "socialism" has taken the place of Catholicism) when the official sexual morality as it appears through the pages of Dr. Atarov's book irresistibly reminds one of the sex education advice written by well-meaning doctors in books for parents' use around 1890? All the fetishes of bourgeois morality, and more generally of the morality of patriarchal class societies, all the reactionary ideology pompously dressed up under the mystificatory name of "science," all the most backward prejudices and the hypocritical bad faith of a puritanical petty bourgeoisie are to be found in Atarov's book. If morality is a "superstructure" whose content would be determined unambiguously by "infrastructures," how does it happen that the moral superstructure of "socialist" society, its sexual ideology, runs completely parallel to the most rigorous bourgeois sexual morality—the bourgeois sexual morality of the nineteenth century?

We will not try to treat here the subject itself, which is immense. Indeed, starting from Atarov's "ideas," there would be no profit in doing so. However, a few remarks on the substance of the matter are indispensable if we want to understand the *social* signification of the type of sexual morality it expresses and its function within the edifice of Russian society.

Atarov starts out from the old sophism that consists in establishing a distinction between puberty and "sexual maturity" and then drawing completely arbitrary conclusions therefrom. This argument, a sort of scientific blackmail, expresses at the same time ignorance of scientific matters, in medicine as well as in ethnology. The sole meaning the distinction between puberty and "sexual maturity" can have, from the medical and physiological point of view, is this: puberty brings with it sexual capacity properly called, namely, the capacity to copulate; it does not necessarily entail the ability to reproduce, namely, the ability to be impregnated for girls and perhaps even the ability to impregnate for boys, which in the great majority of cases seems to occur a few years later.

It therefore is a perfect case of bad faith to create confusion between "sexual capacity" and "capacity to reproduce." And it is perfectly arbitrary, from the scientific point of view, to justify, as both Atarov and bourgeois sexual morality do, the prohibition of sexual relations imposed upon adolescents by appeal to their "immaturity," which could be, at most, immaturity only from the standpoint of reproductiion. But if the only goal and the sole "justification" for sexual relations were reproduction, why not then prohibit them also for women who have had their change of life? More generally speaking, why not prohibit all of humankind from having sexual relations,

beyond the two or three or four times necessary for the reproduction of the species? The sexual function among human beings goes far beyond its reproductive signification, as is proved by the fact that a normally constituted individual can have and does have sexual relations thousands of times in his life, whereas a few times would suffice to guarantee the fulfillment of the reproductive function. Moreover, the above discussion has something intrinsically absurd about it: if one wanted to maintain (against the most commonplace of evidences) that puberty did not entail sexual capacity, then why does one take the trouble to prohibit something that would be impossible? No one has ever dreamt of prohibiting nursing infants from piloting planes. All the pseudoscientific trappings of the argument about whether or not adolescents have the capacity for sexual relations are aimed simply at camouflaging the following fact: one must *prohibit* adolescents in particular, but even other individuals, whoever they may be, from using their sexual faculties the moment that this usage comes to be situated outside the framework imposed by "society."

What justifications are presented in favor of this prohibition? It is often said (and it is also something insinuated in the distinction between "puberty" and "maturity") that free sexual activity on the part of adolescents would have catastrophic results because it would end in the procreation of children for whom these adolescents would not be in a position to assume the responsibility, either morally or economically. First of all, however, and as has already been stated, it is practically certain, in the great majority of cases, that sexual relations between adolescents cannot result in the procreation of children. One knows of Polynesian or Indian tribes[2] whose adolescents go through a phase lasting many years in which free sexual intercourse (where even the couples are formed in an extremely transitory and loose manner) occurs without there being children, either because of physiological inability in the sense mentioned above, or because the girls, preserving a knowledge of their bodies that Westerners have lost, avoid relations during the days when they are fertile. And it is when this phase has ended, which occurs at the same time that they are recognized by the tribe as adults, that young men and young girls contract stable marriages within which they will have children.

Next, what prevents adolescents from being provided with the means for and the knowledge of existing safe contraceptive methods? What else, if not the will of established society to repress their sexual activity by brandishing the threat of having a child, as before (and still now, for Atarov does not deprive himself of this ploy) the threat of venereal diseases was used?

Finally, if, for *an individual* who is placed in a given social framework that he cannot change simply through his desires or actions, the possibility of having a child presents itself—whether one is an adolescent or even an adult—as a threat of catastrophe, given the conditions imposed by society, one cannot without further ado place oneself at the same vantage point when examining the problem in general. Why should adolescents have to cover the economic costs of a child born to them? Why should they be without economic resources of their own? Why should they be raised in a way that renders them incapable of assuming the responsibilities of having a child or of doing something else? We are not saying that adolescents must make babies, but simply that discussing these problems without putting the assumptions

of the established order into question for a single moment is the indelible mark of the most perfect philistinism.

Just as reactionary and antiscientific, under their mask of pseudoscientificness, are Dr. Atarov's ideas on masturbation. Let us pass over the ridiculous notion that one can establish a cause-and-effect connection between masturbation and tight-fitting garments, a connection borrowed directly from the sexological wisdom of the governnesses of 1880. Let us also pass over the fact that Atarov contradicts his own theses on the absence of "sexual maturity" when he speaks about the extent of masturbation among adolescents, for what does masturbation among adolescents presuppose if not in the first place the intensity of sexual desire and the capacity to satisfy it? And why is this desire satisfied in this fashion? In the great majority of cases, because social constraints, both of an external and of an internal character, prevent it from being satisfied in a normal fashion. This is the same hypocritical "morality" that Atarov is trying to defend. It creates and multiplies with its own hands the "evil" that, in other respects, it condemns and takes measures against.

What Atarov says about the harmful character of masturbation is, however, not merely erroneous, it is positively criminal. For, inasmuch as masturbation is accompanied, in adolescents, by harmful effects, these effects result not from the act of masturbation itself, which in itself has nothing harmful about it; inasmuch as it allows the organism to rid itself of tension it cannot discharge normally, it would on the contrary be beneficial. These effects result from the conflict that exists, in the adolescent who masturbates, between the need to satisfy his desire by the sole path left open to him and the social-"moral" prohibition weighing down upon masturbation, the feelings of guilt one experiences when one gives in to this desire, the fear of castration that inevitably results from the warnings and the threats about the physical and moral impairment that masturbation might bring on,[3] guilt and fear the old wives' tales now being circulated by Atarov obviously serve only to spread and reinforce.

All this is obviously related to Dr. Atarov's hilarious ideas about chastity. These ideas are almost impossible to discuss seriously, as would be the physical theories of a self-educated man who knows nothing about modern physics, or even classical physics. For, what Atarov says about this subject not only shows his total ignorance of psychoanalysis,[4] but places him below classical psychiatry and even at a lower level than that of the good family doctor found in one of Balzac's novels. Let us recall the phrase of Charcot (cited by Freud) that he used in describing to a colleague the case of a woman who was suffering from serious problems and whose husband was more or less impotent. When his colleague saw no relation between the two, Charcot exclaimed quite brusquely, "But in cases like these, it always is the genitals! Always! Always! Always!" And even before the appearance of psychoanalysis, a Viennese doctor, Chrobak, in sending Freud a patient who was married for eighteen years to an impotent man and, still a virgin, suffered from serious anxiety attacks, wrote to him at that time, "We know too well what the only possible prescription in these cases is, but unfortunately we cannot prescribe it. It is: *Penis normalis. Dosim. Repetatur.*"[5]

There are innumerable cases in psychoanalytic therapeutics where the restoration to the individual of his capacity to masturbate without anxiety has brought with it the disappearance of serious symptoms, tics, and so on. But in any case, the way

in which Atarov poses the problem of the relations between chastity and health or individual creativity is so deplorable that no discussion is possible on this level. *What kind of* chastity, for *whom*, during *what* part of one's life, in *what* context, for *what* reason, with *what* compensations or diversions—when these questions are not posed, the problem makes no sense. What Atarov says about it—that chastity increases one's energy and creative power—not only is false from the empirical point of view (among creative individuals one meets both the chaste and the "debauched," "normal" people as well as sexual perverts, as the most cursory examination of history will convince anyone), but—and this is what is most comical—it ultimately boils down, as a result of its simple-mindedness and naiveté, to a grotesque caricature of this Freudianism he opposes in other respects, for what he is saying implies that all the "energy" of the sexually unfulfilled libido would be completely transformed, without the slightest loss, into sublimated activity. Now, this is monstrously untrue in any case; the problem of the relations between the repressed libido and sublimation is infinitely more complicated, and a general "rule" of this type, properly speaking, makes no sense.

What is at stake, in summary, in all this? Clearly, the pseudoscientific arguments of Atarov (like those of his counterparts in the West) serve only to hide an ideology, a sexual "morality" that, from the point of view of rational justification, is perfectly arbitrary.

Yet this ideology, while arbitrary from a scientific point of view, has some very precise functions, a signification, and a social root. Identical with the repressive morality that predominates (or rather, has predominated) in the West,[6] it aims, like its Western counterpart, at prohibiting individuals from the autonomous (i.e., conscious and self-directing) exercise of one of their most essential activities. It tries to deprive them of freedom and responsibility in a fundamental domain and to oblige them to conform to externally imposed norms and to the pressure of "public opinion" rather than to criteria forged by each person starting from his needs and his experience. It is therefore a morality of oppression and alienation. It is destined to mass-produce individuals full of internal conflicts with a characterological structure anthropologically complementary to the hierarchal structure of society: acceptance of irrational norms as soon as they are sanctified by the established order; an infantile attitude toward people who incarnate, on the societal scale, one's parental images; the dominant role that, in compensation, is played by almost all men in their families and by a few people in their tiny workplace or elsewhere. We will return, in a forthcoming article, to this fundamental problem, which goes far beyond the ideas of Dr. Atarov and even beyond the sexual question in the USSR.

Let us say, in conclusion, only that, whether one looks at its labor system in the factories, its political structure, or its official sexual morality, the USSR always exhibits the same countenance, that of a society of oppression and alienation.

Notes

1. T/E: Paul Bourget (1852–1935) was a French novelist who incorporated his traditionalist Catholicism into didactic moral tales.

2. See Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and Elwyn Verrier, *The Murias and Their Gothul.*

3. We are speaking about the simplest, the most "normal" of cases. In any case, it is unreservedly true that, to the extent that there are harmful effects, these effects come from a conflict interiorized by the subject. The conflict can be even more complicated; if, for example, in the fantasies always accompanying masturbation, sexual "deviations" about subjects that otherwise are strongly repressed and censored are then expressed, the subject feels doubly guilty by his act of masturbation. In this case, too, however, it is obvious that the prohibition of masturbation is the near equivalent of breaking the thermometer: what is needed is to treat the neurosis on the individual level, to eliminate or to reduce its causes on the societal level. On all these problems, see W[ilhelm] Reich's fundamental work, *The Function of the Orgasm* [T/E: trans. Theodore P. Wolfe, rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986)], of which a very bad translation (but which at least has the merit of existing) was published in 1952 by *L'Arche*.

4. Still recently, a Soviet psychiatric treatise expressed itself in the following way apropos of psychoanalysis: "Freudianism has no scientific value. Its popularity is to be sought in its ideological signification: it profits the capitalist system. Only people who have a superficial understanding of clinical psychiatry accept it."

5. Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, p. 73.

6. It is well known that this repressive morality is in the process of collapsing in modern industrialized countries without established society being able to replace it with another. This raises key problems of a new kind; we hope to be able to speak about them at another time.

5
Student Youth

There are 250,000 of them, neither children nor adults.

They do nothing and yet they work. They have no money, but as a general rule they are not poor. They are the sons of the bourgeoisie, and they are not bourgeois. The girls look like the boys, yet know not whether they would like to be like them or not. They see in their professors both fathers and bosses but fail to choose between the two.

There are 250,000 of them who do not look alike, from the real soldiers and fake students of the Saint-Cyr [military college] to the fake bohemians and true architects of the fine arts school, passing by way of the "planners"-in-training at the political science school and the Lévi-Straussian-Marxist intellectuals at the Sorbonne. There are activists for [the French Communist party newspaper] *L'Humanité*, and vendors of [the sports paper] *L'Equipe* (the most numerous bunch), and one should not forget the anarchists in Antony [on the outskirts of Paris] and the soccer players in the Charléty [stadium], the refined revolutionaries and assiduous readers of *Le Monde*, the cinema enthusiasts of the rue d'Ulm, the beatniks of the Old Navy [bar], girls to be married during the first year of law school, thirty-year-old students who will succeed in passing the teachers' exam "this time around," the math fiends and the medical students.

So this is all pretty funny, right?

J_____, a buddy over at Polytech confided in me:

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> I did math in Nice. It was kinda fun. I slaved away on the beach; I held my study assignments down under some rocks, and got a tan out in the sun. Nice life, huh?
>
> School, that was a rude awakening. First, without knowing why, I was made a noncom in the French Army. I was under a professional, an adjutant, given orders. I did some training in Algeria to see how our work (the army's) was going. I had to pay two million [old] francs in the end to avoid staying in the army. Here we are among "high society" people. We are part of the big family of the polytech alums, the "Mafia," as we say.
>
> The deal's pretty straightforward. Military discipline allows the State to condition us totally. They rapidly and smoothly produce the officers [*cadres*] they need. Military life prevents us from having steady and close contacts with other students.
>
> Of course, we don't know any workers, and the idea that another kind of society, or other types of human relations, could exist, never comes to mind. What the State offers us just has to appear as success. Our parents, our social class, will end up convincing us. So our life will have been chosen without us.
>
> Mr. Rueff[1] may very well say that at least we are not like those guys at the University, that we have a sense of honor and of responsibility.
>
> As for responsibility, well, I just don't see it. As to honor, you know as well as I that they kicked out Schwartz, our best calculus professor, because he had signed the Manifesto of the One Hundred Twenty One.[2] They make mincemeat of guys all day long, and then they get pissed off when there's a protest. Everyone knows that for them what counts is being "good-natured," like with a worker. You know, those who think that this society is the best one possible, that there is nothing to change—that is to say, nothing for us to do except to start all over again what other people already have spent their whole lives doing.

B_____, who is in a school that turns out engineers, told me with a smile of resignation:

> You are clocked in and out like in a factory, you are forced to eat in the canteen at noon. In the library you will never find a political or historical magazine. To drive into our heads that we will become bosses, we're served up courses in scientific management. We also do training stints in industry; we get to see machines and engineers, but it's like workers don't exist when we go on these visits, unless they are there as part of the machinery. They want to get a tighter and tighter grip on us; for example, excuses for absences are harder and harder to obtain.

The situation of the student today cannot be understood unless we understand the objective, sociological function higher education is supposed to fulfill in contemporary society.

This function is two-sided and contradictory.

On the one hand, higher education is supposed to fabricate—more and more along the lines of mass-production methods—the intellectual workers and trained staff [*cadres*] of which the bureaucratized society of modern capitalism has need.

The bureaucratic economy and bureaucratic society require a growing number of engineers, technicians, scientists, teachers, doctors, sociologists, psychologists, administrators, economists, planners, organizers, and so forth, in order to develop production, to administer the tentacular machinery of the State, to "adjust" the psychology of individuals and groups and to make them regain the balance this society, by its very functioning, is constantly destroying, to "organize" leisure and life outside production, and to . . . train an ever growing number of new people to fill these same roles. To do this, one has to find "capable" youths not only among the children of the traditional bourgeoisie but also among those of the petty bourgeoisie and soon among the proletariat and the peasantry. The backward-looking Left is content merely to denounce the class character of higher education in France, recalling that only 3 percent of students are "sons of workers." The class character of higher education resides, however, in the *content* of this type of education and in its *social function* as construction site where future managerial staff [*cadres*] are fabricated. Were the bourgeoisie, suddenly overcome by some strange mental illness, henceforth to recruit students exclusively among the sons of manual workers, higher education would not become "proletarian" for all that. To the extent that the bureaucratization of modern capitalism is an irreversible tendency; to the extent, too, that the development of production techniques increasingly reduces the importance of simple manual labor, a growing pseudo-"proletarianization" of recruitment efforts in the area of higher education may be predicted without fear of contradiction.

For a long time to come higher education will still collide against the economic situation of the overwhelming majority of families of workers and low-paid employees, the people who are unable to afford for their children the costs of several years of study. The Band-Aid approach that today constitutes financial aid, scholarships, etc., is becoming more and more inadequate with each passing day. One day or another, student grants ["*pré-salaire*"] will have to be established as the only way to ensure adequate recruitment in the field of higher education. This is the clearest meaning of the much-touted process of "democratization."[3]

It follows from these same considerations that the University, as mass producer of trained staff with precise destinations, has to undergo, is undergoing, and will undergo more and more a process of capitalist "rationalization." It has to furnish rapidly, and with a minimum of losses, the maximum number of trained staff optimally adapted to their ultimate utilization. Whence all these trends that, like all reforms in present-day society, are, to say the least, ambiguous in character. Curricula are modernized, which means in part that they are being adapted to scientific changes, but especially that there is an attempt to adapt them to future career prospects. There is talk about establishing contacts between the University and the production sector, but this means much less genuine contact between students and the social reality of production, and much more an adaptation of university training to the requirements of companies.

On the other hand, however, university education is the supreme institutional depository of the "culture" of present-day society and the principal instrument for its development. It is supposed to represent scientific objectivity, human rationality in its highest expression; it is supposed to combat all "authority" and to set freedom

of research, of thought, and of expression above all else, to place the disinterested search for truth at the summit of all values, to show that true science is always in the service of humanity—in brief, it is supposed to be the ultimate guarantor of the spiritual values of society and of their transmission to succeeding generations.

Understanding by spiritual values essentially the values of the bourgeoisie,[4] this actually has been the role played by the European University since the end of the Middle Ages and even more so from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of the First World War. It may be said that, during this period, the "social" role and the "cultural" role of the University by and large coincided. Established society had need of a very limited number of doctors, lawyers, philosophers, scientists, and professors, and they came basically from the sons of the ruling class. This society provided them a general, disinterested, humanistic education (with the least specialization possible). The conflict between this "humanism" and the real state of society remained rather limited, insofar as (1) this "humanism" itself remained abstract; (2) the bourgeoisie presented itself as (and actually was) a class acting for the liberalization of society, the instauration of democracy, universal education, etc.; and (3) when a certain petty bourgeois "radicalism" began to seep into the University, the University's ties with the real world of society and its influence over the latter were still practically nonexistent. Above all, however, the conflict, virtual as it was, was also *external*. A certain bourgeois rationalism was confident of its solidity and its irreversibility. The crisis of society had not yet penetrated into the depths of the culture.

Today, the social and even the strictly and narrowly *economic* role of the University is becoming predominant. It would be in the logic of the system for the University to split into fragments, into a series of higher vocational schools annexed to large companies—and this is what is tending to happen in the United States. But as always, the logic of the system is not logical, and here too the system succeeds in operating only to the extent that it eludes its own logic. The University's need to fulfill its "cultural" function, while constantly combatted, is also constantly and necessarily reaffirmed. A society of alienation cannot become purely and simply alienated, for then the philosophical term would resume as its sole possible meaning the psychiatric one. Even a totalitarian society that aspires to subject everything to the will of the ruling class cannot eliminate objectivity—as the Russian bureaucracy has just learned from bitter experience. It cannot suppress all challenges from within, nor can it eliminate the requirement of rationality to which it otherwise is constantly giving rise. Even an exclusively utilitarian society is obliged to understand that, in the long run, progress in the field of applied technology depends on the development of fundamental, "disinterested" research, a fact of which the American bourgeoisie is now becoming increasingly aware.

The dual and contradictory function of higher education in contemporary society therefore cannot be eliminated or suppressed. At the same time that the University has to become bureaucratized; has to mass-produce trained staff destined for specialized, compartmentalized jobs; has to bow to the imperatives of the demand for human material needed to fill the offices and laboratories of modern business firms, as well as those of the State, it also has to continue to train real scientists, real researchers, real thinkers.[5] And it has to do so in an age where, no longer from the

outside, but now from within, the meaning, the goals, the methods, the importance for humanity of science, of research, and of thought are radically being put into question.

Students obviously are an extremely heterogeneous group.

Their social backgrounds are quite diverse, and as the number of students increases, their backgrounds will become even more so. If presently the upper and middle strata of the bourgeoisie still furnish the bulk of this group, the numerical weight of sons and daughters of the petty bourgeoisie, of civil servants, and of salaried employees is going to continue to grow.

Students also are a transitory group, and the diversity of the social prospects before them increases even further their "virtual" heterogeneity. Depending upon his field of studies and family connections, the student will be able to land a career paying him from eighty thousand to three million [old] francs a month (from accredited teacher to medical doctor or factory director).

Their studies last from three to seven years. The youngest students are still adolescents, the older ones already practice a profession. They do not always understand each other very well. Moreover, their shared difficulties, their problems, may appear secondary to them, since tomorrow these will no longer be of concern.

We must add to these characteristics another one, that of individual or "collective" isolation. The student setting favors the development of bands or narrow groups naturally formed on the basis of a particular discipline or, as occurs in many cases, around a specialty; here political or cultural affinities often come into play. Often, it is tradition that provides these bands with a role: in liberal arts, politics will be held in esteem; in medicine, it will be rugby. Nevertheless, in the end few students are included in such groups, which, moreover, remain mutually isolated.

And yet it is within this overall group, the most heterogeneous and the most disparate of all social categories in France, that one could find over the past few years the sole *collective* reaction against the Algerian War: a series of demonstrations, a near-permanent state of agitation during the final two years of this war, large numbers of youths becoming active in what they thought were organizational forms capable of effective antiwar action. It would be tendentious and superficial to object that these actions "did not go very far" or that "only a minority took part." The minority that took part at one moment or another in the student demonstrations must have totaled in Paris between ten thousand and fifteen thousand persons, or 15 to 20 percent (and probably more) of the total student body. For the rest of the population, the percentage hovers slightly above zero. And if one wants to argue that the students' actions did not go very far, one would have to be honest and add that the action of the rest of population hit neither wide nor near the mark for the simple reason that it never got off the ground. Moreover, the phenomenon is not limited to France. It can be observed as well in the United States (where a growing portion of students are mobilizing themselves in the struggle for the rights of blacks or against nuclear weapons), in Japan (where it was students who prevented Eisenhower from visiting Tokyo in July 1960), in Italy,[6] and elsewhere, not to mention in underdeveloped countries (Cuba, Turkey).

The explanation for this phenomenon lies in many factors that are related to some of the most profound traits of the contemporary social situation.

The first factor expresses what must really be called "the revolt of contemporary youth," even if the term has already been compromised. This phenomenon, which is constantly expanding, must not be confused with the classical phenomenon of "generational conflict." The latter, which existed in previous phases of bourgeois society and in certain other societies, usually has expressed the aspiration of young people to take the place of their elders, to leap beyond the obstacles that stood in the way of their advancement within the framework of the existing system; in those cases, the system was not put into question as such. Familiar especially among the sons of the bourgeoisie, this opposition could take objective form as a struggle against the routine and the sclerosis of the generations already in place, and it could even lead to the adoption of political positions of a liberal-radical or social-reformist kind. Still today, a great number of the militants active in the UNEF[7] can be classified as belonging to this category.

In today's youth revolt, however, much more is at stake than generational conflict. For an increasing number of young people, what is at issue is not the place their elders will or will not make for them within the present system, but the system itself. They do not envy the life of their parents, they criticize it—and sometimes they no longer even criticize it, so foreign, so empty, so meaningless it appears to them. And this phenomenon, even if at the outset it is observed especially among the children of the middle classes,[8] has won over all classes of society. D[aniel] Mothé has shown, in "The Young Generation of Workers,"[9] the feelings of rejection and opposition young workers today exhibit both toward the "values" capitalist society offers them and toward their class's traditional forms of organization (parties and trade unions). Work on the shop floor as well as trade-union activism, the hollow words of party programs as much as the dismal and impoverished character of adult life elicit only their sarcasm and their contempt.

It is this same revolt that is spreading as well in general fashion among student circles and bringing a significant minority to the point where they are ready to adopt radical political positions.

A second important factor is the very nature of student work and the problems that thereby attract their attention.

For a section of the student body, the culture dispensed to them is as "true," the knowledge as exact, as possible. These are the ones who remain mystified by the second function of the University, which we mentioned above (guardian of values and source of objectivity). The University appears to them as a place apart in this society, they feel privileged to be a part of it, and they take seriously the established culture as it is given. They learn everything because it is necessary, they attend all their courses and try above all to understand how their professors view the work so that they might turn in the assignment, the exam, or the paper the professor himself would have submitted. After having worked like that for four years, they will find a boss to work for during another forty years, or become—as their supreme ambition—professors themselves. This section of the student body is dwindling in numbers, for reasons we shall discover immediately below.

Another section, which is becoming increasingly large, is that of the cynics. They

have an inkling of the problems internal to this culture or to its relation to social reality, but their peace of mind and "professional future" are of greater importance. They sense that what they are being taught is sometimes false, and almost always inadequate; they hold no illusions about its increasingly instrumental [*utilitaire*] character; they are not unaware that the system is, above all else, trying to make them into trained staff useful to this system—doctors, economists, physicists, or engineers. And after all, why not? They accept this fate and remind themselves especially of the privileged place in the system that will be theirs, thinking that what they need most is a car, vacations, money, a second home in the country. They are not unhappy about the fact that, thanks to all their "hard work" studying (and this is principally a matter of cramming for exams), they will be able to settle down in some comfortable niche within the managerial hierarchy.

For a third category, however, one that is growing increasingly large with time, its contact with university culture becomes the starting point—since this is *logically* unavoidable—for a series of questions that will end up challenging this culture and the society that produces it, as well as the relationship between the two. This challenge is, we say, logically unavoidable, for it is at the far end of every attempt to think seriously about the social function or the cultural function of the University or, finally, about the relationship between the two. It is constantly nourished by the very crisis and the internal disintegration of the established culture (which has led its finest representatives to put this culture as well as the social system from which it emanates into question). And it is broadened by the fact that, in the very attempt to place the University in the service of the social system, the ruling class introduces into the University all the contradictions, all the conflicts, all the incoherencies and inconsistencies that characterize this system.

We cannot elaborate systematically on this question here, as it goes far beyond the object of our discussion. Nevertheless, a few examples will allow the reader to grasp better what we mean.

No matter what the particular subject, a requirement of rationality is characteristic of all teaching dispensed at the University. University education strives to find the truest and most coherent system possible. Now, irrationality exists everywhere in society today. How can the young economist seriously believe in the rationality of the contemporary economy, whether "planned" or not, when even among academic professors no one, save a few old fogies, dares to go on pretending that the present-day economy functions in a rational manner or that a rigorous systematic knowledge of economic reality actually exists today or even one day will exist? How can the young sociologist of labor relations avoid posing the most radical questions when the very object of his science is the divergence between the "formal" organization and the "informal" organization of the business firm and of the labor process itself, along with their conflict, a divergence and conflict without which his science would neither have arisen in the first place nor have had a raison d'être? The young physicist might be able to ignore, by narrowness in his rigor, the theoretical crisis shaking the foundations of contemporary physics and destroying its pretensions to scientific rigor, consoling himself with the thought: "After all, all this research yields practical results useful to humanity." Useful to humanity, like the H-bomb? Or like the conquest of space? Can he avoid the problem of the scientist's responsibility to-

ward what his science produces when the greatest and most distinguished atomic scientists, Oppenheimer in the lead, are urging him to raise the problem of the *goals* of science and that of its role in society? Will the student in social psychology be able to continue to close his eyes to the missions now being assigned to his profession: to resolve, for the bosses' benefit, the question of how to integrate workers into the operation of the business firm—or of how to launch useless products onto the market through the use of publicity?

At the same time, both the way this culture is transmitted and the way teaching is organized are beginning to appear to many as open to challenge. The curricula are obviously imposed; with the enormous extension of knowledge and increasing specialization, there is no set curriculum, and the choices now being made seem arbitrary—as they are in large part, since they reflect the tendency to adapt studies to future career prospects or express the whims of instructors who teach from the galley proofs of their latest book.

Lecture courses reduce the student to the status of an auditor; he is there to memorize, to ingurgitate, and, when there is an exam, he will "spit it back out." The arguments of the professor, his manner of posing questions and sometimes of ignoring them, have the force of authority. These aspects are less pronounced in seminars developed in certain departments around a professor [*Maître*] or around his gifted disciple. To participate in such seminars, however, in most cases one has to be a graduate student already. Above all, the questions raised and the work methods employed depend on the professor, who uses the seminar to build up a school, promote his ideas, and enjoy the use of free assistants. In fact, the seminar tends to become a group of shared interests for a few people. The group's patron often has an important post; upon him depend grants and placements. Students have an interest in participating in his seminar in order to make themselves known and appreciated by him, hoping to obtain later on his support upon entering his coterie. In practice this often means placing oneself at the disposal of the professor and accepting his orientation without too much discussion. In fact, even here we find an aspect of bureaucratization in higher education, one that tends to become predominant and reveals the classical phenomena of this process: fragmentation into cliques and clans. Everyone talks about it in the case of medicine, as in the various scandals over interns' exams, but it is not generally recognized to what extent this situation is inevitably expanding into all other disciplines as laboratories, research posts, and so on, multiply.

There is, therefore, an increasing likelihood that, through his very contact with the University, the student will be led to put into question the culture offered him, the relationship this culture maintains with society at large, and the very structure of this society itself.

There is, finally, a third determining factor in the student's situation that allows us to understand both the relative ease with which students become politically engaged and the relative fragility of this engagement.

At least in the present system of higher education, the student retains a rather large degree of freedom but also exhibits a certain irresponsibility. These are two sides of the same coin. The student is subject to much less in the way of social constraints than is, for example, the young worker. He is not obliged to earn his living,

his studies do not take up all his time, and he has no foreman breathing down his neck. Only rarely does he have a wife and children to feed. He can draw from the culture he receives some elements for his reflection, but he is still not integrated into the active life of society. In fact, he can adopt extreme political positions without great danger, no formal or even de facto sanctions threatening him, save in exceptional instances.

These same factors, however, make it possible for his engagement to lack force, and too often this engagement remains merely "intellectual" and transitory. If a large minority of students does take advantage of this phase of freedom-irresponsibility to take a step back from the established social system, judge it, and line up against it, it is inevitable that a large falling off will occur later on. Knowing what proportion of this minority will maintain, consolidate, and deepen their opposition later on in active life depends on other factors that go far beyond the student question: the fate of the "new middle strata" in an increasingly bureaucratized society, the rebirth of a movement of struggle among laboring people. Whatever may become of these factors, one thing, however, is certain: the coming period will see the strengthening and the broadening of this current of student youth that contests the existing order.

In recent times, most student actions against the Algerian War have taken place under orders from the UNEF [student union]. There is an ambiguity here, even a contradiction, which is of importance. As we have already pointed out, in its structures and in its organized expression (and taking into account the separation that exists within the group between leaders and members, a separation as pronounced as the one existing within trade unions or political parties), the UNEF represents aspirations for reformist renewal among young future cadres (the affection *L'Express*[10] lavishes on the group is characteristic) who are demanding the modernization of the system and the elimination of those of its absurdities that work against its own proper functioning. And considering the chaos, the anarchy, and the extravagant role still played by the residues from the past, all of which are characteristic of French capitalism, it really will be a piece of cake, won't it? To ask for better and larger facilities for higher education normally should be the concern of the Minister of Education; in the present-day situation in France, where a government that encounters no significant opposition nevertheless does not have the strength to displease one or two hundred sidewalk wine merchants so that it can build a Faculty of Sciences center, this request can take the shape of a radical demand. And the same thing goes, mutatis mutandis, for other demands, concerning student housing, student grants, and so forth. We are in no way saying that these demands are perverse, quite the contrary; nor we are arguing that those who advance them do so with the "explicit and conscious" goal of strengthening the capitalist system by allowing it better to train its future staff. No sane individual can pass by the new Faculty of Sciences building without having the desire to shoot on sight those responsible for building this monstrosity. Nor can such a sane individual help but become enraged when he compares the amount of governmental expenditures lavished upon the *force de frappe*[11] with the amount allotted to education. Nevertheless, whatever the value of those sentiments and the importance one should grant to the students' refusal pas-

sively to accept the fate with which society tries to saddle them, it nevertheless remains the case that there is nothing in these problems that capitalism is objectively incapable of solving, and nothing even that it will not "resolve," after its own fashion and from its own perspective, as reality comes to oblige it to take cognizance of its true interests. It is not these demands as such, it is the limits of these demands, the absence of any challenge to the present system, that objectively determines the character of the UNEF. And the subjective counterpart of this objective character is to be discovered in the mentality of a good portion of its organizing staff [*cadres*], who accept the goals of present-day society and its division into classes but who would like better organization, some "progress"—that is to say, in short, a modern form of exploitation.

This ambiguity appeared, in an extreme case, apropos of the Algerian War. After a certain fashion, the UNEF carried the banner that should have been that of "enlightened" and progressive bourgeois politicians: stop this absurd war in which, without any hope of success, billions are being thrown away that could have been infinitely better employed at home; negotiate with the leaders of the opposing camp. It is neither the time nor place here, nor is it worth the effort, to explain why and how, in the France of 1959–62, this position might have appeared radical. What is certain, however, is that for the majority of the students who took part in the actions against the Algerian War something else was at issue. It was French imperialism that they were condemning, along with the infamy of the traditional political leaders; it was the struggle of the Algerian people that roused their solidarity. And through the struggle against the war, in the demonstrations, the draft resistance, the clandestine activity, the aid to the Algerians, the discussions about their revolution, a minority of students became aware as well of what set them against *their own society*. Without yet being able to formulate clearly this sentiment to themselves, they felt that only a revolution could change a society and give birth to a new, human order. And it is not surprising, in the political desert that is France today, that there were many who wanted to go to Algeria, to Africa, or to Cuba—and that some had already gone—thinking that at least there their activity and their work would have some meaning.

The youth revolt, the critique of the kind of education young people have handed to them and of the way in which it is transmitted, the lived contradiction between the social function and the cultural function of the University, the crisis of values that leaves the young person at a loss, without models and without goals of which he can make sense, allow us to understand in a profound way the interest students had for the Algerian War. Torture, relocation camps, the war as it was conducted by the French army, have affected the young because these were glaringly spectacular concrete instances of the social contradictions they too, though certainly to a lesser degree, had to suffer in the field of education. Algeria was the occasion, the catalyst, for an opposition that is seeking its own way and that, little by little, is becoming aware of itself.

In the years to come, the number of students is going to continue to grow in very large proportions. The projections of the "Fourth Plan," which has not been subject to any challenges on this score, state that there will be 500,000 students in 1971,

this being a doubling of the present size of the French student population. The University will then truly be this mass-production factory of trained staff that the bureaucratic economy requires. Of these 500,000 young people, a very small minority will then be called upon to take roles as top-level managers. Most of the rest will have to fill the obscure jobs of middle-level employees amid millions of other working people. Their life will be that of executants working within more or less completely hierarchized systems who are given narrow and strictly prescribed tasks to accomplish, without any possibility of determining their functions, their jobs, or, in sum, their lives. The so-called liberal professions will become less and less so, and the values attached to them will become more and more caught up in the overall problem of society. More and more, university education itself will bring out the contradiction between the requirements of the social system and the aims of rationality, objectivity, and truth without which this system cannot exist.

Certainly, the factors of "politicization" connected to the present state of anarchy will disappear: the student's freedom-irresponsibility will be much diminished, the feeling that one's education inadequately prepares one for one's future career and the problem of job openings will be settled to a certain degree. The bureaucracy will make an effort to propound new values: scientific planning, the great importance of the trained staff member's mission in life ("management expert fulfilling a task in the nation's interest"). As these characteristics come to the fore, they will in return allow the reality of modern society to make its appearance, and the student very soon will be confronted with a kind of alienation differing little from that experienced by the industrial worker and the salaried employee.

In a group of students that will have become much more homogeneous as far as its recruitment and its situation are concerned, there will be much less opportunity to become cynical and unaware, carefree and naive. And for a minority of students, the elements for a revolutionary raising of consciousness will be brought together, and a lasting political engagement, based upon criticism of the bureaucratic organization of society, will become possible.

Notes

1. T/E: Jacques Rueff (1896–1978) was a conservative political economist and President Charles de Gaulle's chief economic adviser.

2. T/E: The "Manifesto of the One Hundred Twenty One" was an appeal signed by French intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, against the Algerian War. It called for draft resistance on the part of French youth and for support of the Algerian anticolonialist forces.

3. This obviously does not mean that we are against student grants, etc. We are simply trying to make it clear that a society that endeavors to instaurate the most efficient system of recruitment for the future members of its privileged ranks is for that reason no less a society based upon the existence of privileged people. We will return to this point below.

4. Or, if one prefers, the ruling values of the era's culture. However, this vast question cannot be raised here.

5. There is an attempt now to try to go beyond this antinomy by introducing new divisions within higher education and by creating a "superuniversity" for elite thinkers and researchers (the "Troisième cycle"). But clearly this remedy only aggravates the problem inasmuch as, on the one hand, it drives specialization to the point of paroxysm and, on the other hand, it tends to transform the bulk of students into scientific hacks.

6. See the articles of Kun-ichi Kuroda, "Japon, juin 1960," and of the comrades from *Unità Proletaria*, "Italie, juillet 1960," in *S. ou B.*, 31 (December 1960).

7. T/E: UNEF is the Union nationale des étudiants de France, a student group active in the struggle against the Algerian War. Castoriadis explains his views on this group at length below.

8. See "La Fureur de vivre," in *S. ou B.*, 20 (December 1956), pp. 207–8. [T/E: *La Fureur de vivre* is the French title for Nicholas Ray's 1955 American film *Rebel without a Cause*, which starred James Dean.]

9. In *S. ou B.*, 33 (December 1961), pp. 16–42. [T/E: The original French title is "Les jeunes générations ouvrières."]

10. T/E: *L'Express* is a middle-of-the-road weekly newsmagazine.

11. T/E: The "*force de frappe*" refers to the "deterrent" power of France's nuclear forces, initiated under President Charles de Gaulle.

6
The Miners' Strike

The miners' strike has caught the attention and rightly roused the passions of the entire laboring population of France. From the beginning to the end of their strike, the miners have demonstrated their resolve not to give in to the dictates of the government. They have made de Gaulle look ridiculous, turning his requisition order into a scrap of paper. Their strike has put an end to the long period of inaction through which laboring people have been passing, a period that had worsened since the 13th of May[1] and that had been only partially interrupted by public-sector labor actions in 1961 and 1962 (among workers for the national railroad and electrical power companies). It has brought to light again that, in an industrialized country, the determination of the mass of laboring people not to let things just happen [*se laisser faire*] can be of far greater weight than the palavers of the Guide.[2] For all these reasons, it is an event possessing considerable positive meaning, one that will leave its mark on the life of the country for years to come.

And yet, without mentioning the commentators from the official Left, many of our revolutionary comrades, swept along by an understandable revolutionary enthusiasm, go so far as to attribute to this strike a signification and to trace out for it prospects that are absolutely foreign to it. In order to understand the matter clearly, we must look into the meaning in modern countries of wage strikes directed and controlled by the trade unions.

In a modern capitalist country, the economy would not be able to function without periodic and regular wage increases. Laboring people's consumer spending and

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what depends on it in fact represent, directly or indirectly, three-quarters of total production. If consumption stagnates, production stagnates along with it.

Since the last war, the bosses and the capitalist State have come to understand more and more that the expansion of mass consumption levels is a necessity for their economy. They have seen that, within certain limits, wage increases do not pose a threat to the system or constitute a life or death issue. Quite to the contrary, they see in it rather a safety valve against working-class revolt. This does not mean that they often grant such increases spontaneously, still less that they do not talk tough.

Conflicts break out periodically, therefore, because the bosses want to give only part of what laboring people are asking for. These conflicts break out also because changes at the point of production and changes in technical production processes (automation, for example) end up threatening certain classes of jobs or entire sectors of production, with the response that the workers demand guarantees or compensation.

Now, one of the basic functions of unions today is to prevent conflicts between labor and management from taking on a violent form and from challenging the established order. Trade unions negotiate over wage demands and succeed most of the time in achieving a compromise with management. In substance, these compromises generally run as follows: in exchange for "concessions" from management on wages and other similar gains, the unions accept and reconfirm, each time, management's absolute dictatorship at the point of production, its absolute power when it comes to discipline and the "organization" of work. In this way, management has its hands free to increase workers' output, so that in the end wage increases do not cost them anything.

From time to time, however, such a compromise does not come to pass, whether due to a particularly tough employer or to the grass roots being more angry than usual. At such a time, the unions, both to get their grip back on the base and to show the bosses that they are indispensible and that they hold some real trump cards in reserve, organize a big strike, a great pitched battle. This is a phenomenon typical of all modern countries: the United States, England, Germany, Denmark, etc. All such strikes end with compromises wherein the trade unions frequently obtain a little more than was offered to them at the outset. None have ever "broken out" [*débordés*] of this framework.

It is within this perspective that we also should view the miners' strike in France. It is remarkable to us because, in a certain way, it is the first of its kind, but there will be others. Since 1957 French wage levels have lagged behind production, and in the long run they will just have to catch up. Obviously, wage levels will not catch up with production "automatically," since, no matter how much modernization and "rationalization" it undergoes, French capitalism will grant such increases only under pressure.

Nevertheless, one must not take one's desires for realities, and attribute to these movements a radical signification they do not possess. Save for completely exceptional circumstances (the sole example of which, in postwar history, is that of the Belgian strikes of 1960–61), these kinds of strikes do not and cannot challenge the established order.

They do not challenge this order through their objectives (demands for a wage

increase), since capitalism can very well grant, without fear of mortal danger, increases of 6, 8, or 10 percent, . . . and in fact it does so.

They do not challenge this order through the underlying intentions of the strikers. Of course, at the root of every struggle, even the most limited demand concerning wages, is the revolt of the laboring person against the condition the capitalist system of rule allots to him. In the case of such strikes, however, every demand that is lodged is placed on the terrain of wages and cannot go beyond it.

Nor do they challenge this order through the form they take, through the kinds of activity laboring people adopt: these strikes are "institutionalized." In nearly all their details, they unfold according to the same procedure; the trade unions prevent them from getting out of hand. The attitude of workers is to furnish massive and passive support for the strike, even when they agree to make enormous sacrifices to obtain success. Some insist upon the fact that the miners' strike was set off by the grass roots, but it should also be noticed that the grass roots ceased to manifest their initiative from the moment the unions took matters in hand.

On the terrain where these strikes are situated, no "outflanking" [*débordement*] is possible. At the end of the strike the workers may protest—as the miners have done—because they find the negotiated compromise hardly satisfactory. This, however, is precisely what proves that they have not departed from the framework imposed upon them from the outset of these struggles.

Could the propaganda of a small revolutionary organization change things in this regard? Under present circumstances, it is an illusion to think so. Such an organization could, and should, spread ideas and slogans such as "For nonhierarchical demands"; "Let the strikers themselves direct the strike in the form of elected and revocable strike committees responsible to assemblies of strikers." These slogans are just, but they cannot have any practical effect. If they were adopted by the workers—or even simply by a sizable minority—it would signify that the workers want (were it only on partial and limited points) to *break* with the system, with such of its expressions as job and wage hierarchization, or with the hold the trade-union bureaucracy exercises over these movements. Now, the strikes we have been discussing do not aim at that kind of rupture. Rather, they are, as we have tried to show, undertaken *so as to* unfold within the framework of the system. This may be seen once again, in the case of the miners' strike, in the fact that, as soon as they can negotiate a compromise over wages, the unions have in fact dropped demands that, without being revolutionary in any way, were heading a little farther (forty-hour week, the future of the mining industry), without this abandonment having particularly stirred up the workers.

A revolutionary group will support these movements as far as its full strength will allow, and that is the case for several reasons. It will do so because it is always with the exploited and against the exploiters; because it is just that the exploitation of laboring people not become any heavier; because, if laboring people remain apathetic, their living conditions and working conditions will grow only worse all along the line; because, even if it is in a distorted and truncated fashion, these movements demonstrate that it is upon the labor of the exploited that all society rests. It will seize this occasion to make laboring people see what hierarchy really signifies (11 percent for those who earn 600 francs and 11 percent also for those who earn

6,000 francs) and the true role of the trade-union bureaucracy, whose sole concern is how to end the strike in the quickest way without losing face. But it will not overlook the obvious or see in these strikes what is not there: a point of departure for a radical break by laboring people with the system.

Notes

1. T/E: Castoriadis is referring to May 13, 1958, the day of the French army insurrection in Algiers, which led to the investiture of Charles de Gaulle as president of the Council and to the end of the Fourth Republic.

2. T/E: "The Guide" refers to President Charles de Gaulle.

7
Postface to "Recommencing the Revolution"

The ideas formulated in "Le mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne" [see *CMR 2*, pp. 47–204; T/E: translated as "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" in *PSW 2*, pp. 226–315] aroused from the outset a certain opposition within the S. ou B. group. Its spokespersons were R[oger] Maille, P[ierre] Brune, and, after a number of fluctuations, J[ean]-F[rançois] Lyotard. After some very long discussions and a few attempts to halt or postpone indefinitely its publication, the text was finally able to appear only at the end of 1960, with the mention that it did not commit the whole group. The harsh and confused controversies whose point of departure was this text continued for almost four years. Since the texts of the opposing tendency (which, characteristically, called itself the "antitendency") have not been, to my knowledge, delivered to the public till now,[1] I can only invite the reader to reconstitute the ideas behind these texts through the explicit or implicit critique made of them in the preceding articles, and simply repeat what I have already written about them: that their shameful neopaleo-Marxism does not succeed in dissimulating the emptiness of their ideas.

In fact, the "antitendency" remained on the terrain of a "correct Trotskyism" and imparted to the monthly journal, *Pouvoir Ouvrier*, an orientation almost exclusively centered around the war in Algeria, denunciation of the government, and strikes over economic demands. We did not break with Trotskyism, however, simply in order to win acceptance of the idea that Russia is a class society. Proposals to work on such themes as the critique of consumer society, education, the crisis of youth, women, the family, sexuality, and culture were greeted with derision or buried under heaps of traditional "economic" and "political" platitudes. They refused to take

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into consideration the signification of the relative influx of students into the group beginning in 1959—which prefigured, on our minuscule scale, Berkeley [1964] and May 1968 [in Paris]. They considered these students only as material for the fabrication of all-purpose militants, who would then be sent to factory gates; in no way did they consider the specificity of their motivations and of their problems. Countless hours of discussion were purely and simply wasted as the "antitendency" tried to prove that the "student question" did not exist and that all problems could be reduced to capitalist economic exploitation and state-directed oppression. The fact that the ideas formulated in "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" and the themes we had evoked in this essay were only the natural outcome, the organic development of the analyses and orientation of *S. ou B.* for many long years; that already, in "Sur la dynamique du capitalisme," published in 1953 and 1954, a rejection of Marxist economics was implied; and that if they wanted to reject these ideas and themes, they would also have to reject their premises and somehow take a stand against such texts as "On the Content of Socialism," "Bilan,"[2] or "Proletariat and Organization"—all this was, quite simply, blocked out of their field of vision. Let us at least give some credit to R[oger] Maille: as opposed to J[ean-]F[rançois] Lyotard, who had always greeted such articles with enthusiasm, at least Maille had constantly opposed all the disquieting innovations contained in these texts with a frank grimace of disgust.

Such were the sterility of our discussions and the feeling of frustration they engendered. The "antitendency" never succeeded in producing any positions whatsoever, other than self-contradictory polemical arguments, nor, till the eve of the 1963 scission, did they even succeed in producing a text defining what the "antitendency" was. As a result, the comrades who were in accord with the orientation outlined in "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" were led to meet separately in order to be able finally to discuss and to work on the substance of the problems. These meetings were remarkably productive, and their results provided in large part the substance of the issues of *S. ou B.* published after the scission (nos. 35–40).[3]

Thus was a de facto scission set up within the group. It was formally consecrated at a general meeting in July 1963. Although the "tendency" was in the majority by a few votes, in order to avoid the sad quarrels that often accompany these scissions in extreme left-wing groups, an amicable accord was reached that left the "antitendency" with *Pouvoir Ouvrier*. The scission was announced, courtesy of us, to the readers and supporters of *S. ou B.* by the following letter, dated October 28, 1963.

Dear Comrade,

You have followed the work of Socialisme ou Barbarie *and of* Pouvoir Ouvrier *for some time. A scission has just taken place within the group that publishes these two organs, and it is our duty to inform you of its origins, its character, and its results.*

Since its inception, we have characterized the installation and the stabilization of the Gaullist regime in France not as a prelude to fascism but as French capitalism's passage to the phase of modern capitalism, analogous to the one other industrialized countries are going through (see the editorial "Bilan,"[4] S. ou B., *26 [November 1958]). Events have shown that this appreciation of the situation was correct. But what exactly did this phase signify as to the functioning of capitalist society and as to the situation and the outlook of a revolutionary movement?*

*Starting from an examination of the social reality of modern countries, we have tried, since 1959, to give a response to this question. This examination has led us to see, much more clearly than in the past, that a great number of ideas and positions belonging to the traditional Marxist movement no longer corresponded—or, in certain cases, never had corresponded—either to reality or to the exigencies of revolutionary socialist activity. The principal conclusions we have drawn have been formulated in a series of articles on "Modern Capitalism and Revolution (*S. ou B.*, 31, 32, and 33). We think it useful to recall here the key points of these conclusions, for they are at the origin of the divergencies within the group and ultimately of the scission it has just undergone.*

In modern capitalist countries, we no longer observe the manifestations once considered the inevitable characteristics of the functioning of the capitalist system: economic depressions, unemployment, absolute or relative pauperization. This is no accidental or passing phenomenon: state management of the economy allows capitalism to get a handle on the way the economy evolves so as to avoid catastrophic imbalances. If that indeed has become possible, it is because there is not, as had been believed in classical Marxism, an insurmountable contradiction between "the development of the forces of production" and "the forms of property ownership" or capitalist "relations of production." Capitalism is oriented toward the expansion of production, which it is perfectly capable of realizing, and this expansion of production necessarily implies and entails a rise in mass consumption. Of course, both this type of production and this type of consumption have a capitalist character and content. Moreover, even with this continuous expansion of production, society's "economic problem" is in no way resolved—no more than any other problem under capitalism. And yet, this problem does not contain within itself the explosive dynamic once attributed to it. It no longer can be maintained that the content of Marx's economic analyses still hold. Our last point is that, if the fundamental problem capitalist society raises for people is that of economic misery, we do not see why and how laboring people could be led to struggle for socialism, with all that this involves in bringing about changes in the relationships between people and in the orientation of society.

We therefore must dislodge the economic from the preponderant position Marxism has accorded it until now. The insurmountable contradiction of capitalism is to be found at a more profound level, in the structure of social relations in all domains. Whether it be a question of work, of the functioning of institutions, or of cultural life, everywhere the same antinomy is encountered: capitalism tries to exclude people from the direction of their own activity, but at the same time it must obtain their participation in this activity. The worker must, like an automaton, apply the work regulations imposed upon him; at the same time, however, he must display the initiative and inventiveness of a superhuman each time the rules prove to be absurd or an unforeseen situation arises—that is to say, half the time. The citizen, the political or trade-union militant must confine himself to dutiful obedience toward higher-ups, but he is reproached for his apathy, which prevents the State, political parties, and trade unions from functioning well.

Far from allowing capitalism to surmount this antinomy, the increasing bureaucratization of the capitalist system only exacerbates it and broadens its scope. For, in taking over not only production and the management of the economy, but also politics, consumer life, leisure, et cetera, the bureaucratic manipulation of social activities brings out everywhere a conflict of the same type. Because it contains this insurmountable antinomy, the

capitalist system gives rise to a permanent struggle against it. Not "economic contradictions," not some "laws governing the movement of society," but this struggle itself has been the factor that, more and more, determines history for the past century.

Only from this angle can we understand why there can be a question of a socialist revolution and not simply a blind revolt of starving workers. For this antinomy can only be eliminated through the management of production by the producers, this being the central demand of socialism. The fundamental question for a new society, the question of autonomy, *is raised in a negative way in and through capitalist slavery. The problem, as it is posed objectively to laboring people in modern society, is the problem of their concrete life as producers, of the meaning of their work, and ultimately of their life. They can resolve the problem only by overthrowing social structures and social relations* in their entirety.

Present conditions allow us, therefore, to deepen and to enlarge both the idea of socialism and its bases in social reality. This claim seems to be in direct conflict with the total disappearance of the revolutionary socialist movement and of political activity on the part of laboring people. And this opposition is not merely apparent. It is real, and it constitutes the central problem of our age.[5]

The workers' movement has been integrated into official society; its institutions (parties, unions) have become those of official society. Moreover, laboring people have in fact abandoned all political and sometimes even trade-union activity. This privatization of the working class and even of all other social strata is the combined result of two factors: on the one hand, the bureaucratization of parties and unions distances these organizations from the mass of laboring people; on the other, rising living standards and the massive proliferation of new types of consumer objects and new consumer life-styles provide them with the substitute for and the simulacrum of reasons for living. This phase is neither superficial nor accidental. It expresses one possible destiny of present-day society.

If the term barbarism *has a meaning today, it is neither fascism nor poverty nor a return to the Stone Age. It is precisely this "air-conditioned nightmare," consumption for the sake of consumption in private life, organization for the sake of organization in collective life, as well as their corollaries: privatization, withdrawal and apathy as regards matters shared in common, and dehumanization of social relationships. This process is well under way in industrialized countries, but it also engenders its own opposites. People have abandoned bureaucratized institutions, and ultimately they enter into opposition against them. The race after "ever higher" levels of consumption and "ever newer" consumer objects sooner or later condemns itself by its very absurdity.*

Those elements that may allow a raising of consciousness, socialist activity, and, in the last analysis, revolution, have not disappeared, but on the contrary are proliferating in contemporary society. Each laboring person can observe the anarchy and incoherencies that characterize the ruling classes and their system in their management of the grand affairs of society. And in his daily existence—and in the first place, in his work—he sees the absurdity of a system that tries to reduce him to the status of an automaton but is obliged to call upon his inventiveness and his initiative to correct its own mistakes.

The socialist revolution remains the sole positive perspective open to humanity—on the condition, however, that its objectives become the solution of these *problems, and not the "more rapid" development of the forces of production. Likewise, a revolutionary or-*

ganization is more necessary than ever—on the condition that this organization break with the ideas and practices of the past and base its activity on the central idea that socialism is the autonomous activity of the laboring masses and that, outside this activity, nothing can assure its success, neither the leadership of an omniscient Party nor some "laws of history" secretly arranged by Providence so as to make communism the outcome.

This analysis—as ought to be clear to those who have followed Socialisme ou Barbarie—*is the organic outcome of the line of development of the review. Indeed, it merely regroups and systematizes ideas already formulated in the review a long time ago.*

And yet, as soon as this analysis was submitted for discussion, it met with bitter resistance and vehement opposition from a part of the group. Moreover, it is impossible to grasp hold of any positive or even negative content in this resistance and opposition. Indeed, not only is it not known till this day what the comrades who reject this analysis propose to put in its place, but it is impossible to understand to what precisely they are opposed. Certain ideas (like that of privatization, or of the need to talk about all aspects of the lives of laboring people and no longer just about economic demands and traditional politics) were violently attacked from the outset, only to be accepted later on by the opposition and ultimately considered as being a matter of course. Other ideas, like the critique of classical Marxist economic analysis and of its themes (increasing exploitation, etc.), have been successively rejected and accepted, without one being able to discern a direction in this pendular movement. Thus, despite our efforts to obtain a clear and systematic discussion of the divergencies at issue, such a discussion, wherein certain theses would be opposed to others or at least to distinct and well-defined negations of the theses in question, has never been able to come to the surface. Under these conditions, it was inevitable that the situation would end in a scission. This scission, which has in fact existed for several months, was formally consummated this past July. It has been agreed through common consent that we would continue publication of the review, Socialisme ou Barbarie, *and that the other comrades would continue publication of the monthly journal,* Pouvoir Ouvrier.

We have no intention of speaking at length in the review about this scission, for one simple and obvious reason: one can hardly criticize people who offer no positions and are content to state that, as long as classes continue to exist, Marxism by definition cannot be surpassed. We equally feel obliged, however, to state here what in our view is the character and the content of this scission.

To the small minority of people who, in France and elsewhere, continue to lay claim explicitly to revolutionary ideology, a series of crucial questions arises:

Are not the traditional conceptions, even when "improved," from now on insufficient for understanding the world today and, still more, for transforming it?

Has not a long phase of the workers' movement come to an end?

Are not a new revolutionary ideology and a new revolutionary practice required by our epoch?

To these questions, as one will have already understood, we respond clearly and squarely: "Yes." A radical reconstruction of the revolutionary movement is to be carried out, as much regarding theory as regarding practice. It will certainly not start from zero, since we have at our disposal the experience of a century of workers' struggles, as well

as the enormous progress in the understanding of history and society that Marxism has represented. In both cases, however, we have merely the materials, which can attain their value only through a new effort of elaboration and through a new outpouring of activity. The experience of a century of the workers' movement is for us an object of study, not a book of lessons. How could it be otherwise, since in it the negative and positive aspects balance each other out, since this movement has forced considerable changes upon the capitalist system while also having as its outcome at the present time the degeneration of the sole victorious revolution ever to have taken place and the integration of its parties and unions into established society? Marxism remains for us an unequaled source of theoretical inspiration, but it ceased to be a living theory forty years ago. And how, indeed, could its fate be separated from that of the workers' movement it animated and in which for better or worse it was embodied? Nothing solid can be built until one has given the past its due, without veneration or hate.

Those who do not accept this point of view belong to this past that they cannot look at objectively and equitably since they still find themselves in it. Part of the dead weight that weighs on people's consciousness, they are the conservatives in the revolutionary movement. And ever since it first came into being, the revolutionary movement has regularly generated its own conservatives; it has moved forward only to the extent that it has been able to surmount the opposition they have erected.

In the world of today, however, conservativism is falling apart, among revolutionaries no less than among reactionaries. For fifteen or twenty years, the principal form of conservativism in the revolutionary movement, Trotskyism, certainly remained incapable of moving it forward, both practically and in the realm of ideas. Yet at least it claimed and it strove truly to conserve *something—to defend and preserve the "orthodox" Marxism and Bolshevism of the heroic period. The conservatives we encounter today, those from whom we are separating ourselves, conserve nothing; they no longer even dare to say that they want to preserve orthodox Marxism or Bolshevism. Among them too, as at all levels of society, conservativism has a bad conscience and dares not speak its name.*

We approach with confidence a new period in our work. If this scission weakens us numerically, if it risks for a time discouraging certain of those people who have been following our efforts, it also allows us to rediscover a cohesiveness in our ideas and our attitudes whose absence over the past three years had diminished, by more than half, the effectiveness of our group.

Notes

1. T/E: In 1974, at approximately the same time this postface was first published, Jean-François Lyotard, one of those associated with the aforementioned "antitendency," while still not explaining the position or principles of the "antitendency," nevertheless opened a four-page "parenthesis of hate" against Castoriadis in *Economie libidinale* (Paris: Minuit) as he noted derisively that Castoriadis was in the process of publishing his own writings from the *S. ou B.* period (the 10/18 series, from which the present three volumes are drawn). Lyotard there accuses Castoriadis of wanting to be both the creative God of Revolution and its passive "valet," adding that Castoriadis, being a "pimp," is unable to admit an otherwise "noble" desire to dress as a transvestite!

Lyotard, who has recently published his own writings from *S. ou B.* in book form under the title *La Guerre des Algériens* (Paris: Galilée, 1989 [selections from which are to appear in a book forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press]), has since labeled *Economie libidinale* "my evil book" (see *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], p. 13). Indeed, he seems to have

retracted totally the "basis" for his earlier criticism of Castoriadis, namely, his objection to "the great sewer hole of consolations named *spontaneity* and *creativity*, . . . that abominable, supermale thing of generalized creativity" (*Economie libidinale*, p. 142). In his note preceding the texts published in *La Guerre des Algériens*, he now acknowledges the "obvious debt" he owes *Socialisme ou Barbarie* as he states, "For the inventiveness of the immediate practice of these [working-class] struggles is so natural that its value remains unperceived [by whom?—DAC]. Now, its value is that this inventiveness is *already* emancipation." (Here Lyotard seems to be overstating the case, or perhaps is belatedly adopting C. L. R. James's one-sided thesis concerning an already existing, implicit socialism in the workplace, a view criticized by Castoriadis in Section I.3.b. of "On the Orientation of Our Propaganda," the second part of "For A New Orientation" [1962], in this volume.) Lyotard adds: "And the role of the revolutionary organization was not to direct the struggles, but to contribute to them the means for deploying the creativity that is exercised within them. . . . Under the names of 'inventiveness,' 'creativity,' 'self-management,' with the principle of autonomy already there within the concreteness of the class struggle . . . , the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* designated, I believe, the secret whence all resistance draws its energy. . . . It [the group] appeared on what is called the political scene only in 1968, when the student movement advanced some of the motifs that had been those of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*" (pp. 34–36).

Therefore, creativity—whether or not it is still to be judged a "supermale thing"—no longer seems to elicit Lyotard's wrath or contempt. Indeed, a recognition of the project of autonomy along with an acknowledgment of the importance of the revolutionary group's attitude toward the autonomy of people's struggles—the attitude he had previously characterized as that of a passive "valet"—now become *the* keys to an appreciation of his and the group's contribution to the revolutionizing of French society. Nor are we told any longer that the "libidinal economy" of working stiffs drives them to *jouissance* in the performance of rationalized and compartmentalized capitalist production tasks, a drive that supposedly had eliminated all pretensions to creative and autonomous self-activity.

In an afterword to *Peregrinations*, entitled "A Memorial for Marxism: For Pierre Souyri" (originally an article published in 1982 in the French review *Esprit*), Lyotard finally provides an explanation for, or rather attests to his perplexity at, his own stand against the "tendency" within S. ou B. during the early sixties: "I am trying to understand today why, in spite of the *différend* which opposed me to Souyri and the sympathy I had for the majority of theses presented by Castoriadis, I found myself, at the time of the 1964 schism, with Souyri in the group which opposed Castoriadis. And also why, in May 1968, while I was working one morning with some comrades from the Movement of March 22 on the draft of a tract intitled 'Your Struggle is Ours,' when one of the former comrades of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* who had gone over to the 'tendency,' and whom I respected, came to get me from a nearby hall so that I could participate in the elaboration of the Movement's platform, which the Movement had entrusted to the direction of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and ICO (*Informations et Correspondance Ouvrières*), I answered them stupidly: No, I don't have confidence in you. . . . It was something of a lapsus" (p. 59).

Utilizing his concept of the "*différend*"—or "the multiplicity of untranslatable idioms" supposedly revealed by "Capital" (p. 61)—Lyotard goes on to confirm Castoriadis's long-held suspicion that there never was the slightest principled basis for the opposition of the "antitendency"—and of Lyotard in particular—to the "tendency" and to its theses, as these theses had been presented by Castoriadis: "I felt myself close to these theses, open to their argumentation, because I could believe that they formulated in a clear manner the suspicions and misgivings of which I have spoken. . . . [However, t]here was something that did not let itself be corrupted by the wealth of argumentation that the "tendency," and especially Castoriadis, expended in order to explain and justify the new orientation. Nothing was lacking from the argumentative panoply of these comrades, and yet this saturation revealed a lack . . . : the disappointment coming from exhaustiveness" (pp. 55 and 59). The "tendency" is thus faulted for the very perspicacity, diligence, and consistency of its arguments! "What then was lacking in its argumentation?", Lyotard asks rhetorically. "No one among the opposition that we formed was able to say at that time [*sic!*]. Let us call it complexity, the *différend*, the point of view of class." Having discovered "my *différend* with Souyri, and paradoxically the retreat of Marxism for me, . . . the thing within which divergences took form" (p. 60), Lyotard makes his subsequent, but still inexplicable "*différend*" with the "tendency" the justification (?!) for his "decision" to stay with Souyri and the "antitendency," to split the group irrevocably in two at a time when it was gaining a broader audience and when radical challenges to established society were beginning to take concrete form, and to continue down a road that no longer was his! (*Decision* is a word we must place between quotation marks here to indicate the total arbitrariness of Lyotard's ruminations:

Under these circumstances, why decide to stay with one group rather than another? Is the "justification" for his siding with Souyri's outdated Marxism precisely Marxism's lack of justification? Since, however, Marxism has presented itself as an ironclad theory of all history, ready to provide an exhaustive "dialectical materialist" explanation of all phenomena, including those that are "superstructural," why side with Souyri's Marxism against Castoriadis's critique precisely of Marxism's theoretical pretensions—especially if one's objection happens to be to argumentative *exhaustiveness*?) Identifying this "*différend*" with Marxism itself, even as he hints at the latter's shortcomings, Lyotard concludes his "Memorial for Marxism" with a statement that in and of itself would eliminate all possibility of critical confrontation and reflection, let alone decision making: "As such, it [Marxism as the *différend*] is not subject to refutation: it is the disposition of the field which makes refutation possible" (p. 73). Here we are not very far from the French existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, who in 1960 declared Marxism "the unsurpassable philosophy of our time," even as he admitted that "there is no such thing as dialectical materialism, at least for the time being."

It is perhaps in this light that we can best view Lyotard's recent repetition of his criticism that Castoriadis had succumbed in the early sixties to an "existential" attitude toward the "content" of his theses (p. 60), theses that Lyotard now takes to be merely a "cleaning up of Marxism, giving it new clothes" (ibid.). In fact, it was the "antitendency," and Lyotard himself in person, who had, when they complained about Castoriadis's "existentialism," faulted him for his *abandonment* of Marxism—or "the point of view of class," as Lyotard now puts it as he repeats the charge of abandonment at the same time that he introduces the idea that Castoriadis was merely "cleaning up Marxism." "The old contradiction of Capital, judged to be economistic," Lyotard continues by way of "explanation" of Castoriadis's supposed Marxian existentialism, "was thrown out. A new contradiction—social, this time, and almost ethical—between directing and executing was designated the right one" (ibid.). Strangely, Lyotard now seems to be attacking the descriptive validity and analytical usefulness of the directors/executant division, which was first formulated by Castoriadis in 1949 and to which Lyotard had apparently never voiced any objections during his nine years in S. ou B. Yet it was in the new departure sketched out in the controversial (for Lyotard) text, "Recommencing the Revolution" (*RR*)—the text that provoked the final scission of the group—that *Castoriadis* questioned precisely the continued usefulness of such a dichotomy for the analysis and the transformation of a society that is made up of a complex and interlocking multiplicity of pyramids of command and execution. (See *RR*, points 13–15, and especially point 18, where the directors/executant division is clearly replaced by the one between those who "accept" and those who "combat" the system—perhaps an "existentialist" position in Lyotard's view, but clearly not the one to which he now says he had objected at the time.) Not only was there no principled basis to the antitendency's "position," but Lyotard did not even know what it was that he did not know how to oppose.

Lyotard also informs his readers that he objects to Castoriadis's use of the epithets "paleo-Marxism" and "neo-Marxism" to describe the antitendency's positions (or what, by one's best guess, these positions seemed to have been). He finds this "unjust" (p. 59). A page before this protestation of unfairness, Lyotard quotes from a book by Pierre Souyri in which this ex-S. ou B. member, who left the group at the same time as Lyotard, tried to demonstrate—once again—the "objective" inevitability of the collapse of capitalism. Lyotard adds, by way of commentary, "I admire today [1982] this somber perspicacity, when capitalism, now engaged in a new depression due in particular to overcapitalization, is indeed blindly searching for, at once, the expedients (perhaps war) and the new structures which will allow it to again put off the date of its ruin" (p. 58). One could hardly have hoped for a more perfect neopaleo-Marxist restatement of false economistic platitudes and predictions.

2. T/E: This text has not been translated for the present series. It appears on pp. 89–116 of *EMO 2*.

3. T/E: The reader of the present volume may be surprised to find published below only one other article by Castoriadis from the *S. ou B.* period ("The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy"), and might therefore conclude that the "results" of what Castoriadis has called the group's "remarkably productive" work after the break with the "antitendency" was in reality rather slight, at least as far as Castoriadis himself is concerned. This would be to forget Castoriadis's five-part text, "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory," which was published in issues 36–40 and then reprinted as the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975), trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Oxford: Polity Press, 1987). As was explained in Appendix G, "General Plan of Publication for 10/18 Volumes" of *PSW 1*, *IIS* was originally projected as a two-volume part of the 10/18 series, but eventually was published as a separate one-volume book from another publisher, Le Seuil (Paris). For the non-

French reader to be able to assess the overall work of the final issues of the review, a representative sampling of articles, interviews, etc., by other contributors from the entire period of *S. ou B.*'s existence would also have to be translated. So far, only writings by Castoriadis, Claude Lefort, and Jean-François Lyotard have appeared in English. I hope to be able to publish such a volume of translations in the not-too-distant future.

4. T/E: See note 2 above.

5. This paragraph and the three following ones are a verbatim restatement (except for paragraph breaks) of the beginning of point 29 of *RR*.

8
The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy

[1. The Significance of the Russian Revolution]

We are happy to present to our readers the first translation into French of Alexandra Kollontai's pamphlet *The Workers' Opposition in Russia*. This pamphlet was published in Moscow at the beginning of 1921, during the violent controversy that preceded the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik party. This Congress was to close discussion forever on this controversy as well as on all the others.[a]

People have not finished talking about the Russian Revolution, its problems, its degeneration, and about the regime it ultimately produced. And how could one? Of all the revolts of the working class, the Russian Revolution was the only victorious one. And of all the working class's failures, it was the most thoroughgoing and the most revealing.

The crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871 and of the Budapest uprising in 1956 teach us that insurgent workers encounter immensely difficult organizational and political problems, that an insurrection can find itself isolated, that the ruling classes will not hesitate to employ any kind of violence or barbarian savagery when their power is at stake. The Russian Revolution, however, obliges us to reflect not

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Originally published as "Le Rôle de l'idéologie bolchevique dans la naissance de la bureaucratie," *S. ou B.*, 35 (January 1964). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 385–416. [T/E: We have made extensive use of Maurice Brinton's translation, *From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy* (*Solidarity Pamphlet*, 24 [no date], 18 pp.). Brinton, whose added subtitles we retain here within brackets, notes that "the present pamphlet was later translated into Italian (under the title "Dal Bolscevismo all Burocrazia") and published in 1968 by the Quaderni della Rivoluzione dei Consigli (V. C. Rolando 8/8, Ge-Sampierdarenda). Later in the same year, it was also translated into Swedish (under the title "Bosjevism, Byrakrati!") and published by Libertad (Allmana vage 6, 41460 Göteborg)."]

only on the conditions for a proletarian victory but also on the content and the possible fate of such a victory, on its consolidation and development, on the seeds of a failure whose import infinitely surpasses the victory of the troops of the Versaillese, of Franco's army, or of Khrushchev's tanks.

Since it crushed the White armies and yet succumbed to a bureaucracy it had itself generated, the Russian Revolution puts us face to face with problems of a different order from those involving a study of the tactics and methods of an armed insurrection or a correct analysis of the relation of forces at a given moment. It obliges us to reflect on the nature of the power of laboring people and on what we mean by socialism. Culminating in a regime in which economic concentration, the totalitarian power of the rulers, and the exploitation of the laboring population have been pushed to the limit, and producing to an extreme degree the centralization of capital and its fusion with the State, in its outcome this revolution presents us with what has been and in certain respects still remains the most highly developed and the "purest" form of a modern exploitative society.

Embodying Marxism for the first time in history—only to make us see immediately in this incarnation a monstrous disfiguration of it—the Russian Revolution allows us to understand more about Marxism than what Marxism itself has been able to help us to understand about the Revolution. The regime the Revolution produced has become the touchstone for all current ideas, not only those of classical Marxism, of course, but just as much those of the bourgeois ideologies. This regime has proved the ruination of Marxism through its very realization and has proved the triumph of the deepest layers of these other ideologies through its very refutations of them. Even as this regime has expanded to embrace a third of the globe, has been challenged by workers' revolts against it over the past ten years, has attempted to reform itself, and has now split into two opposing poles, the Russian and the Chinese, it has not ceased to raise questions of the most pressing importance and to act as the clearest as well as the most enigmatic indicator of world history. The world we live in, reflect in, and act in was launched on its present course by the workers and Bolsheviks of Petrograd in October 1917.

[2. The Main Questions]

Among the innumerable questions raised by the fate of the Russian Revolution, two form the poles around which we may organize all the others.

The first question is, What kind of society was produced by the degeneration of the revolution? (What is the nature and the dynamic of this regime? What is the Russian bureaucracy? What is its relation to capitalism and to the proletariat? What is its place in history? What are its present problems?) This question has already been discussed on several occasions in *S. ou B.*[1] and will be again.[2]

The second question is, How can a workers' revolution give birth to a bureaucracy, and how did this occur in Russia? We have examined this question in its theoretical form,[3] but so far we have said little from the concrete historical point of view.

Indeed, there is an almost insurmountable obstacle to a close study of this particularly obscure period extending from October 1917 to March 1921, during which the fate of the revolution was played out. The question of most concern to us is,

in effect, the following: To what extent did the Russian workers try to take upon themselves the direction of society, the management of production, the regulation of the economy, and the orientation of political life? What was their conscious awareness of these problems, the character of their autonomous activity? What was their attitude toward the Bolshevik party, toward the nascent bureaucracy? Now, we should point out that it is not workers who write history. It is always *the others.* And these others, whoever they may be, have a historical existence only insofar as the masses are passive, or active simply to support them, and this is precisely what "the others" will tell us at every opportunity. Most of the time these others will not even possess eyes to see and ears to hear the gestures and utterances that express people's autonomous activity. In the best of instances, they will sing the praises of this activity so long as it *miraculously* coincides with their own line, but they will radically condemn it, and impute to it the basest motives, as soon as it strays therefrom. Thus Trotsky describes in grandiose terms the anonymous workers of Petrograd moving ahead of the Bolshevik party or mobilizing themselves during the Civil War, but later on he was to characterize the Kronstadt rebels as "stool pigeons" and "hirelings of the French High Command." They lack the categories of thought—the brain cells, we might dare say—necessary to understand, or even to record, this activity as it really occurs: to them, an activity that is not instituted, that has neither boss nor program, has no status; it is not even clearly perceivable, except perhaps in the mode of "disorder" and "troubles." The autonomous activity of the masses belongs, by definition, to what is *repressed* in history.

Thus, it is not only that the documentary records most interesting to us during this period are fragmentary, or even that they were and continue to be systematically suppressed by the triumphant bureaucracy. It is that this record of events is infinitely more *selective* and *slanted* than any other historical testimony. The reactionary rage of bourgeois witnesses and the almost equally vicious hostility of the social democrats; the delirious ravings of the anarchists; the official historiography, periodically rewritten to suit the needs of the bureaucracy, and that of the Trotskyist tendency, concerned exclusively with justifying itself after the fact and with hiding its role during the first stages of degeneration—all this "historical evidence" converges on one point: it ignores the signs of the autonomous activity of the masses during this period, or, if necessary, "proves" the a priori impossibility of its very existence.

In this regard, the information contained in Alexandra Kollontai's text is of priceless value. First, because of the direct indications it supplies concerning the attitudes and reactions of Russian workers toward the policy of the Bolshevik party; second and more important, because it shows that a large portion of the working-class base of the Party was aware of the process of bureaucratization that was taking place, and was taking a stand against it. It is no longer possible, after reading this text, to continue to describe the Russia of 1920 as "just chaos," "a pile of ruins," where the thought of Lenin and the "iron will" of the Bolsheviks were the only elements of order in a country whose proletariat had been pulverized. The workers wanted something, and they showed what they wanted through the Workers' Opposition within the Party and the Petrograd strikes and the Kronstadt revolt outside the Party. Both the intraparty and the extraparty challenges had to be crushed by Lenin and Trotsky for Stalin later to emerge triumphant.

[3. The Traditional "Answers"]

Back to the main question: How could the Russian Revolution have produced a bureaucratic regime? The current answer (first advanced by Trotsky, later taken up by the fellow travelers of Stalinism, and today by Khrushchev's men themselves in order to "explain" the "bureaucratic deformations of the socialist system") is the following: the Revolution took place in a backward country, which in any case could not have built socialism on its own; it found itself isolated by the defeat of the revolution in Europe (and more particularly in Germany between 1919 and 1923); and what is more, the country was completely devasted by the Civil War.

This answer would not deserve a moment's consideration, were it not for the fact that it is widely accepted and that it continues to play a mystificatory role. For it is completely beside the point.

The backwardness, isolation, and devastation of the country—all incontestable facts in themselves—might just as well have explained a pure and simple defeat of the revolution and the restoration of classical capitalism. What we are asking, however, is precisely why there was no pure and simple defeat, why the Revolution overcame its external enemies only to collapse from within, why it "degenerated" precisely in such a way that it led to the power of the bureaucracy.

Trotsky's answer, if we may use a metaphor, is like saying, "This patient developed tuberculosis because he was run down." Feeling run down, however, he might have died instead, or contracted some other disease. Why did he contract *this particular* disease? What has to be explained in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution is why it was specifically a *bureaucratic* degeneration. This cannot be done by referring to factors as general as "backwardness" or "isolation." Let us add in passing that this "response" teaches us nothing we could extend beyond the confines of the Russian situation in 1920. The sole conclusion to be drawn from this kind of "analysis" is that revolutionaries should ardently hope that future revolutions break out in more advanced countries, that they should not remain isolated, and that civil wars should not in the least be devastating.

After all, the fact that [since the Second World War] the bureaucratic system of rule has extended its frontiers well beyond the boundaries of Russia, that it has installed similar regimes in countries that in no way can be characterized as backward (such as Czechoslovakia or East Germany), and that industrialization—which has made Russia the second strongest power in the world—has not weakened this bureaucracy at all, shows that all discussion in terms of "backwardness," "isolation," and so forth, is purely and simply anachronistic.

[4. Bureaucracy in the Modern World]

If we wish to understand the emergence of the bureaucracy as an increasingly preponderant managerial stratum in the contemporary world, we are obliged to note at the outset that, paradoxically, it appears at the two opposite poles of social development. On the one hand, it has emerged as the organic product of the maturation process of capitalist society. On the other hand, it appears as the "forced an-

swer" backward countries give to the problem of their own *passage* to the stage of industrialization.

[A. Modern Capitalist Countries]

In the first case, the emergence of the bureaucracy offers us no mystery. The concentration of production necessarily leads to the appearance within business firms of a stratum whose function is to take on the collective management of immense economic units. The task to be performed goes qualitatively beyond the capacities of any individual owner. At first in the economic realm, but gradually also in other spheres, the growing role of the State leads both to a quantitative extension of the bureaucratic state apparatus and to a qualitative change in its nature.

At the opposite pole within advanced capitalist societies, the workers' movement degenerates as it becomes bureaucratized, it becomes bureaucratized as it becomes integrated into the established order, and it cannot become integrated into this order without becoming bureaucratized. The various technoeconomic, state-political, and "working-class" elements constitutive of the bureaucracy coexist with varying degrees of success. They coexist both with each other and with the more properly "bourgeois" elements of society (owners of the means of production). In any case, as the bureaucracy evolves, the importance of these bureaucratic elements for the management of society constantly increases. In this sense, one can say that the emergence of the bureaucracy corresponds to an "ultimate" phase in the process of capital concentration, that the bureaucracy personifies or embodies capital during this phase, in the same way that the bourgeoisie did during the previous phase.

At least as far as its origins and its social-historical function are concerned, this bureaucracy can be understood in terms of the categories of classical Marxism. (It matters little, in this respect, that today's alleged Marxists, who fall forever short of the possibilities entailed by the theory they claim as theirs, remain incapable of granting the bureaucracy any kind of sociohistorical status. These so-called Marxists believe that there is no name for this thing in their ideas, and so in practice they deny its existence and speak of capitalism, as if nothing had changed within capitalism for the past century or half century.)

[B. Economically Backward Countries]

In the second case, the bureaucracy emerges, one might say, from the very void found in this type of society. In almost all backward countries, the old ruling strata are clearly incapable of undertaking the industrialization of the country. Foreign capital creates, at "best," merely isolated pockets of modern exploitation, and the late-born national bourgeoisie in such countries has neither the strength nor the courage necessary to revolutionize the old social structures from top to bottom, as would be required by the process of modernization. Let us add that, because of this very fact, the national proletariat is too weak to play the role assigned to it by the schema of "permanent revolution," that is, it is too weak to eliminate the old ruling strata and to undertake the process of transformation that would lead, in an uninterrupted fashion, from the "bourgeois-democratic" phase through to socialism.

What can happen then? A backward society can stagnate and remain stagnant for

a longer or shorter period of time. (This is the situation today in a large number of backward countries, whether or not they have been constituted as states only recently.) But this process of stagnation in fact signifies a relative and sometimes an absolute deterioration of their economic and social situation, as well as a rupture of the old equilibrium built into these societies. Aggravated almost always by apparently "accidental" factors (which in fact recur inevitably and which are amplified to an infinitely greater degree in a society undergoing disintegration), each upset in the balance of these societies turns into a crisis, often colored by some "national" component. This can result in an overt and prolonged national-social struggle (China, Algeria, Cuba, Indochina) or a coup d'état, almost inevitably military in nature (Egypt).

These two examples exhibit immense differences, but they also share a common point.

In the first type of example (China, etc.), the politico-military leadership of the struggle gradually erects itself into an autonomous stratum that manages the "revolution" and, after victory, takes in hand the reconstruction of the country. To this end, it naturally incorporates all those members of the old privileged strata who have rallied to its cause while also selecting certain members of the masses. And as the country industrializes, it constitutes these elements into a hierarchical pyramid that will serve as the skeleton of the new social structure. This industrialization is carried out, of course, according to the classical methods of primitive accumulation. These methods involve intense exploitation of the workers and an even more intense exploitation of the peasantry, who are more or less press-ganged into an industrial army of labor.

In the second example (Egypt, etc.), the state-military bureaucracy, while playing a role of tutelage with regard to the existing privileged strata, does not completely eliminate these strata or the social situation they represent. Also, one can almost always foresee that the country will not be fully transformed and industrialized until there is a further violent convulsion.

In both instances, however, what we discover is that the bureaucracy substitutes or tends to substitute itself for the bourgeoisie as the social stratum that carries out the task of primitive accumulation.

We must note that this bureaucracy has effectively shattered the traditional categories of Marxism. In no way can it be said that this new social stratum has been constituted and has grown within the womb of the preceding society. Nor is it born out of a new mode of production whose development had become incompatible with the maintenance of old forms of economic and social life. It is, on the contrary, the bureaucracy that gives birth to this new mode of production in the societies we are considering. It is not itself born out of the normal functioning of society, but rather out of the inability of this society to function. Almost without metaphor, we can say that it has its origin in the social void: its historical roots plunge wholly into the future. It obviously makes no sense to say that the Chinese bureaucracy is the product of the country's industrialization when it would be infinitely more reasonable to say that the industrialization of China is the product of the bureaucracy's accession to power. We can only move beyond this antinomy by pointing out that in the present

epoch, and short of a revolutionary solution on an international scale, a backward country can industrialize only by becoming bureaucratized.

[C. Russia]

In the case of Russia, one might say that, after the fact, the bureaucracy seems to have fulfilled the "historical function"[4] of the bourgeoisie of earlier times, or of the bureaucracy of a backward country today. Up to a certain point, therefore, the Russian bureaucracy can be compared to the latter sort of bureaucracy.[5] The conditions under which it arose, however, are different. And this difference is due precisely to the fact that the Russia of 1917 was not simply a "backward" country, but a country that, besides its backwardness, exhibited certain well-developed features of capitalism (Russia was, in 1913, the fifth strongest industrial power in the world)—so well developed, as a matter of fact, that it was the theater of a proletarian revolution proclaiming itself socialist (long before this word had come to signify anything one wants and nothing at all).

The first bureaucracy to have become a ruling class in its society, the Russian bureaucracy appears precisely as the end product of a revolution that everyone thought had given power to the proletariat. It therefore represents a third, quite specific type (although in fact it was the first clearly to emerge within modern history): the bureaucracy born from the degeneration of a working-class revolution. It *is* this degeneration—even if, from the outset, the Russian bureaucracy accomplishes such functions as "manager of centralized capital" and acts as the "stratum for developing a modern industrial economy by every means available."

[5. The Working Class in the Russian Revolution]

Keeping in mind precisely what came afterward, and recollecting too that the October 1917 "seizure of power" was organized and directed by the Bolshevik party and that this Party in fact assumed this power as its own from day one, in what sense can one say that the October Revolution was proletarian (that is, if one refuses at least to identify a class simply with the party claiming power in that class's name)? Why not say—indeed, there has been no lack of people to say it—that there never was in Russia anything other than a coup d'état carried out by a party that, having somehow obtained the support of the working class, was merely trying to instaurate its own dictatorship and succeeded in doing so?

We have no intention of discussing this problem in scholastic terms. Our aim is not to ask whether the Russian Revolution fits into the category of "proletarian revolutions." The question that matters for us is this: Did the Russian working class play a historical role *of its own* during this period, or was it simply a sort of infantry, mobilized in the service of other, already established forces? In other words, did it appear as a relatively autonomous pole in the struggle and the whirlwind of actions, organizational forms, demands, and ideas of this period, or was it just a tool manipulated without great difficulty or risk, a relay station for impulses coming from elsewhere?

Anyone who has studied the history of the Russian Revolution even to the slight-

est degree could answer without hesitation. Petrograd in 1917, and even afterward, was neither Prague in 1948 nor Canton in 1949. The proletariat's independent role was clearly apparent—even, to begin with, by the very way workers flocked into the ranks of the Bolshevik party, giving it majority support, which no one could have extorted from them or forced upon them at the time. This independent role was also shown by the rapport between the workers and this party and by the burden of the Civil War, which they spontaneously took upon themselves. Above all, however, it is shown by the autonomous actions they themselves undertook, already in February and July 1917 and even more so after October, when they expropriated the capitalists without waiting for, or even in acting against, the expressed will of the Party and when they organized production on their own. Finally, it is shown in the autonomous organs they set up: the soviets, and in particular, the factory committees.

The Revolution's success was made possible only because a vast movement of total revolt on the part of the working masses, whose will was to change the conditions of their existence and rid themselves of bosses and Czar, converged with the activity of the Bolshevik party. It is true that the Bolshevik party alone, in October 1917, was able to give articulate expression and an *intermediate objective* to the aspirations of the workers, the peasants, and the soldiers (the overthrow of the Provisional Government). This in no way means, however, that the workers were their passive infantry. Without these workers, both inside and outside its ranks, the Party was nothing, neither physically nor politically a force to be reckoned with. Without the pressure arising from their increasing radicalization, it would not even have adopted a revolutionary line. And at no moment, even long months after the seizure of power, could it be said that the Party "controlled" the movements of the working masses.

This convergence, however, which actually culminated in the overthrow of the Provisional Government and in the formation of a predominantly Bolshevik government, turned out to be temporary. Signs of a gap between the Party and the masses appeared rather early on, even though, by its very nature, such a gap could not be grasped in as a clear-cut a way as one between organized political tendencies.

The workers certainly expected of the Revolution a total change in the conditions of their existence. They undoubtedly were expecting an improvement in their material conditions—knowing quite well that such an improvement would not come about immediately. Only the narrow-minded would tie the Revolution to this factor alone—or the workers' subsequent dissatisfaction to the new regime's incapacity to satisfy these hopes for material advancement. The Revolution began, in a certain sense, with a demand for bread. Long before October, however, it had already gone beyond the question of bread, and had engaged people's total, passionate commitment.

For more than three years, the Russian workers put up with the most extreme material privations without flinching. At the same time, they supplied the bulk of the forces that were going to defeat the White armies. For them, it was a question of freeing themselves from the oppression of the capitalist class and of its State. Organized in the soviets and in the factory committees, they found it inconceivable, even before but particularly after October, that the capitalists would be allowed to

stay on. And in chasing them out of the factories, they were led to discover that they would have to organize and manage production themselves. The workers themselves expropriated the capitalists, doing so on their own authority and acting against the line of the Bolshevik party (the nationalization decree of the summer of 1918 merely ratified what already had been done). And it was the workers who got the factories running once again.

[6. Bolshevik Policy]

As for the Bolshevik party, this was not at all what they were after. Insofar as the Party developed any clear-cut line after October (and contrary to the mythology put out by Stalinists and Trotskyists alike, it can easily be shown, backed up by documentary records, that before and after October the Bolshevik party was totally in the dark as to what it wanted to do after the seizure of power), it aimed at instaurating in Russia a "well-organized" economy along the lines of the capitalist model of the time,[6] a form of "state capitalism" (the expression unceasingly used by Lenin), upon which would be superimposed a "working-class" political power—in fact, this power would be exercised by the party of the "working class," the Bolshevik party. "Socialism" (which effectively implies, Lenin writes without hesitation, the "collective management of production") will come afterward.

And this is not just a question of a "line," of something simply said or thought. In its deep-down mentality and in its real attitude, the Party was permeated from top to bottom with the unquestionable conviction that it ought to *lead, direct, manage* [*diriger*], in the full sense of the[se] term[s]. This conviction, which already existed long before the Revolution began (as Trotsky showed when he spoke of the "committee mentality" in his biography of Stalin), was indeed shared by all the socialists of the era (with a few exceptions, such as Rosa Luxemburg, the Gorter-Pannekoek tendency in Holland, and the "Left Communists" in Germany). This conviction was to be tremendously reinforced by the seizure of power, the Civil War, and the Party's consolidation of power. Trotsky himself clearly expressed this attitude at the time when he proclaimed the Party's "historical birthright."

This mentality was more than just a mentality: after the seizure of power, it almost immediately became a part of the *real social situation*. Individually, party members assumed leadership posts in all spheres of social life—in part, of course, because "one cannot do otherwise." This in turn, however, came to mean: because everything the Party did ensured that it could not be done otherwise.

Collectively, the only real instance of power is the Party, and very soon, only the summits of the Party. Immediately after the seizure of power the soviets as institutions are reduced to the status of pure window-dressing (we need only look at the fact that, already at the beginning of 1918 in the discussions leading up to the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, their role was absolutely nil).

If it is true that people's real social existence determines their consciousness, it is from that moment illusory to expect the Bolshevik party to act in any other fashion than according to its real social position. The real social situation of the Party is that of a directorial organ, and its point of view toward this society henceforth is not necessarily the same as the one this society has toward itself.

The workers offered no serious resistance to this evolution of events, or rather to this sudden revelation of the essence of the Bolshevik party. At least we have no direct sign of such resistance. Between the eviction of the capitalists, followed by the restarting of the factories at the beginning of the revolutionary period, and the Petrograd strikes and the Kronstadt Revolt at its end (winter of 1920–21), we know of no articulate manifestation of autonomous activity on the part of the workers.[b] The Civil War and the continuous mobilization of military forces during this period, the serious nature of immediate practical problems (production, food supplies, etc.), the very obscurity of the issues at stake, and, without doubt, above all the workers' confidence in the Party explain this lack of autonomous expression.

Two elements go to make up the workers' attitudes in this regard. On the one hand, the aspiration to rid themselves of all domination, to take the management of their affairs into their hands. On the other hand, the tendency to delegate power to this party that had just proven itself to be the sole irreconcilable opponent of the capitalist class and that was in fact conducting war against this class. The opposition, the contradiction, between these two elements was not and, one would be tempted to say, could not have been clearly perceived at this time.

It *was* seen, however, and with great insight, within the Party itself. From the beginning of 1918 until the banning of factions in March 1921, tendencies within the Bolshevik party were formed that, with farsightedness and sometimes an astonishing clarity, expressed opposition to the Party's bureaucratic line and to its very rapid bureaucratization. These were the "Left Communists" (at the beginning of 1918), then the "Democratic Centralist" tendency (1919), and finally the "Workers' Opposition" (1920–21).

One will find in the *Historical Notes* we publish following Alexandra Kollontai's text details on the ideas and activities of these tendencies.[c] In them were expressed the reactions of working-class members of the Party—and, no doubt, the attitudes of proletarian circles outside the Party—to the "state-capitalist" line of the leadership. They also expressed at the same time what can be called the "other component" of Marxism, the one that appeals to the masses' own activity and that proclaims that the emancipation of laboring people will be the work of these people themselves.

Nevertheless, these oppositional tendencies were defeated one by one, and finally eliminated in 1921, the same time that the Kronstadt revolt was crushed. The very feeble echoes of their critique of the bureaucracy that can be found later in the (Trotskyist) "Left Opposition" after 1923 do not have the same signification. Trotsky was opposed to the *bad policies* of the bureaucracy and to the excesses of its power. He never put into question its essential nature. Until practically the end of his life, he never brought up the questions raised by the various oppositions of the period from 1918 to 1921 (in essence: "Who manages production?" and "What is the proletariat supposed to do during the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' other than work and follow the orders of 'its' party?").

We may therefore conclude that, contrary to the prevailing mythology, it was not in 1927, or in 1923, or even in 1921 that the game was played and lost, but much earlier, during the period from 1918 to 1920. Already in 1921, a revolution in the full sense of the term was needed in order to reestablish the situation. As events

proved, a revolt such as the one at Kronstadt was not enough to bring about any essential changes. This warning shot did induce the Bolshevik party to rectify certain aberrations relative to other problems (basically those concerning the peasantry and the relationship between the urban and agrarian economy). It thus led to a lessening of the tensions provoked by the country's economic collapse and to the beginning of the reconstruction of the productive apparatus. This reconstruction effort, however, was already firmly set in the groove of bureaucratic capitalism.

It was, indeed, between 1917 and 1920 that the Bolshevik party established itself so firmly in power that it no longer could have been dislodged except by force of arms. And it was from the beginning of this period that the uncertainties of its line were ironed out, the ambiguities lifted, and the contradictions resolved. In the new State, the proletariat was to work, to be mobilized, and, should the need arise, to die in defense of the new power. It was to give its most "conscious" and most "capable" members to "its" party, where they would become the leaders of society. It was to be "active" and it had to "participate" whenever it was asked to do so, but it was to do so only and exactly to the extent that the Party demanded this of the proletariat. Finally, it was to bow completely to the Party's will on all essential matters. As Trotsky wrote during this period in a text that had an enormous circulation both inside and outside Russia, "The worker does not merely bargain with the Soviet State; no, he is subordinated to the Soviet State, under its orders in every direction—for it is *his* State."[7]

[7. The Management of Production]

The role of the proletariat in the new State was thus quite clear. It was that of enthusiastic and passive citizens. And the role of the proletariat in work and in production was no less clear. On the whole, it was the same as before—under capitalism—except that workers of "character and capacity"[8] were to be chosen to replace factory managers who had fled. The main concern of the Bolshevik party during this period was not how one could facilitate the process of workers' collectives taking over the management of production, but rather was, What is the most rapid way of developing a stratum of managers and administrators for industry and for the economy as a whole?

One need only read the *official* texts of this period to eliminate all doubts on this score. The formation and training of a bureaucracy as the managerial stratum in production (with the economic privileges that inevitably go along with this status) was, practically from the beginning, *the conscious, straightforward, and sincere policy of the Bolshevik party, headed by Lenin and Trotsky.* This was honestly and sincerely thought to be a socialist policy—or, more precisely, an "administrative technique" that could be put in the service of socialism, since the class of administrators managing production were to remain under the control of the working class, "personified by its Communist party." The decision to place a manager at the head of a factory instead of a workers' board [*bureau ouvrier*], wrote Trotsky, had no political significance:

> It may be correct or incorrect from the point of view of the technique of administration. . . . It would consequently be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the heads of factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in the abolition of private property in the means of production, in the supremacy over the whole Soviet mechanism of the collective will of the workers, and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered.[9]

Trotsky's phrase, "the collective will of the workers," is a metaphorical expression used to designate the will of the Bolshevik party. The Bolshevik bosses stated this without any hypocrisy, unlike certain of their "defenders" today. Trotsky wrote at the time:

> In this "substitution" of the power of the Party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all. The Communists express the fundamental interests of the working class. It is quite natural that in the period which brings up those interests, in all their magnitude, on to the order of the day, the Communists have become the recognized representatives of the working class as a whole.[10]

One can easily find dozens of quotations from Lenin expressing the same idea.

So we end up with the uncontested power of managers in the factories, under the Party's exclusive "control" (in reality, what kind of control was it, anyway?). And there was the uncontested power of the Party over society, without any control. From that point on, nobody could prevent these two powers from merging, nor could anyone stop the two strata embodying them from merging, nor could the consolidation of an irremovable bureaucracy ruling over all sectors of social life be halted. The process may have been accelerated or magnified by the entry of nonproletarian elements into the Party, as they rushed to jump on the bandwagon. But this was a *consequence*, and not a cause, of the Party's orientation.

It was during the discussion of the "trade-union question" (1920–21), which preceded the Tenth Party Congress, that opposition to this orientation of the Party was most forcefully expressed within the Party itself. Formally, the question was that of the role of the trade unions in the management of production and of the economy. The discussion inevitably focused once again on the problems of "one-man management" in the factories and on "the role of specialists," questions that had already been discussed bitterly and at great length during the previous two years. In Kollontai's text and in the appended *Historical Notes*, the reader will find a description of the various opposing stands on these issues.

Briefly, the party leadership, with Lenin at its head, reaffirmed that the management of production should be in the hands of individual administrators (bourgeois "specialists" or workers selected for their "character and capacity") under the control of the Party. The trade unions were to have the tasks of educating the workers and of defending them against the production managers and the state managers. Trotsky demanded the trade unions' complete subordination to the State, their transformation into organs and appendages of the State (and of the Party). His argument always was the same: since we are in a Workers' State, the State and the workers are one

and the same thing, and therefore workers have no need for some separate organ to defend them from "their" State. The Workers' Opposition demanded that management of production and of the economy gradually be entrusted to "workers' collectives" in the factories, as these had been organized in the trade unions. They wanted "one-man management" to be replaced by a "collegial management" and the role of specialists and technicians to be reduced. The Workers' Opposition emphasized that the development of production under postrevolutionary conditions was an essentially social and political problem whose solution depended on the deployment of the creativity and initiative of the laboring masses, and that this problem was not merely administrative and technical. It denounced the increasing bureaucratization of the State and of the Party (already at this time, all posts involving responsibility of the least importance were filled by nomination from above and not by election), as well as the growing separation of the Party from the workers.

On certain points, it is true, the ideas of the Workers' Opposition were confused, and on the whole the discussion seems to have taken place on a formal level, just as the solutions proposed by both sides were also formal rather than substantive (the substance, in any case, had already been decided on elsewhere than in the Party Congresses). Thus, the Opposition (and Kollontai in her text) did not distinguish clearly between the (indispensable) role to be played by specialists and technicians qua specialists and technicians, under the control of workers, and the transformation of these specialists and technicians into unchecked [*incontrôlés*] managers of the production process. It developed a general critique of specialists and technicians without differentiating between the two categories, thus leaving its flanks exposed to the attacks of Lenin and Trotsky, who had an easy time showing that there could not be factories without engineers. From this position of advantage, Lenin and Trotsky came to the astonishing conclusion that this was a sufficient reason to entrust these engineers with dictatorial managerial powers over the whole operation of the factory. The Opposition fought ferociously for "collegial," as opposed to "one-man" management, a fairly formal aspect of the problem (a collegial form of management can be just as bureaucratic as one-man management), leaving in the shadows the real problem, that of the true source of authority. Thus was Trotsky free to say, "The independence of the workers is determined and measured, not by whether three workers or one are placed at the head of a factory, but by factors and phenomena of a much more profound character."[11] This absolved him from having to discuss the real problem, which is that of the relationship between the "one" or the "three" men and the collectivity of producers in the enterprise.

The Opposition also showed a relative amount of trade-union fetishism at a time when the unions had already fallen under the practically complete control of the party bureaucracy.

> The continuous "independence" of the trade-union movement, in the period of the proletarian revolution, is just as much an impossibility as the policy of coalition. The trade unions become the most important economic organs of the proletariat in power. Thereby they fall under the leadership of the Communist Party. Not only questions of principle in the trade-union movement, but serious conflicts of organization within it, are decided by the Central Committee of our Party.[12]

This being written by Trotsky in response to Kautsky's criticism of the antidemocratic character of Bolshevik power, Trotsky had no reason to exaggerate the extent of the Party's grip over the trade unions.

Nevertheless, despite these weaknesses and despite this relative confusion, the Workers' Opposition posed the real problem: Who is to manage production in the "Workers' State"? And it provided the correct answer: the collective organs of laboring people. What the party leadership wanted, what it had already imposed—and on this point there was no difference between Lenin and Trotsky—was a hierarchy directed from above. We know that this was the conception that triumphed. We know, too, where this "victory" led.

[8. On "Ends" and "Means"]

In the struggle between the Workers' Opposition and the leadership of the Bolshevik party, we witness how the two contradictory elements of Marxism became dissociated. These two elements had coexisted in a paradoxical fashion in Marxism generally and in its incarnation in Russia in particular. For the last time in the history of the official Marxist movement, the Workers' Opposition made audible this appeal to the masses to act on their own, this confidence in the creative capacities of the proletariat, this conviction that with the socialist revolution commences a genuinely new period in human history, in which the ideas of the preceding period barely retain any of their value and in which the edifice of society is to be rebuilt from the roots up. The Opposition's theses constitute an attempt to embody these ideas in a political program concerning the fundamentally important domain that is production.

The triumph of the Leninist outlook is the triumph of the other element of Marxism, which, to be sure, had long since—and even in Marx himself—become the dominant element in socialist thought and action. In all Lenin's speeches and writings of this period, what recurs again and again like an obsession is the idea that Russia ought to learn from the advanced capitalist countries; that there are not a hundred and one different ways of developing production and labor productivity if one wants to emerge from backwardness and chaos; that one must adopt capitalist methods of "rationalization" and management as well as capitalist forms of work "incentives." All these, for Lenin, are just "means" that apparently could freely be placed in the service of a radically different historical end, the building of socialism.

Thus Trotsky, when discussing the merits of militarism, came to separate the army itself, its structure and its methods, from the social system it serves. What is criticizable in bourgeois militarism and in the bourgeois army, Trotsky says in substance, is that they are in the service of the bourgeoisie. Except for that, there is nothing in them to be criticized. The sole difference, he says, lies in this: "*Who is in power?*"[13] Likewise, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not expressed by the "form in which individual economic enterprises are administered."[14]

The idea that like means cannot be placed indifferently into the service of different ends; that there is an intrinsic relationship between the instruments used and the result obtained; that, especially, neither the army nor the factory are simple "means" or "instruments," but social structures in which are organized two fun-

damental aspects of human relations (production and violence); that in them can be seen in condensed form the essential expression of the type of social relations that characterize an era—this idea, though perfectly obvious and banal for Marxists, was totally "forgotten." It was just a matter of developing production, using proven methods and structures. That among these "proofs" the principal one was the development of *capitalism* as a social system and that a factory produces not so much cloth or steel but proletariat and capital were facts that were utterly ignored.

Obviously, behind this "forgetfulness" is hidden something else. At the time, of course, there was the desperate concern to revive production as soon as possible and to put a collapsing economy back on its feet. This preoccupation, however, does not fatally dictate the choice of "means." If it seemed obvious to Bolshevik leaders that the sole effective means were capitalist ones, it was because they were imbued with the conviction that capitalism was the only effective and rational system of *production*. Faithful in this respect to Marx, they wanted to abolish private property and market anarchy, but not the type of organization capitalism had achieved at the point of production. They wanted to modify the *economy*, not the relations between people at work or the nature of labor itself.

At a deeper level still, their philosophy was to develop the forces of production. Here too they were the faithful inheritors of Marx—or at least one side of Marx, which became the predominant one in his mature writings. The development of the forces of production was, if not the ultimate goal, at any rate the *essential means*, in the sense that everything else would follow as a by-product and that everything else had to be subordinated to it. Men, as well? Men, too, of course. "As a general rule, man strives to avoid labor . . . man is a fairly lazy animal."[15] To combat this indolence, all means of proven effectiveness must be put to work: compulsory labor—whose character changes completely when it is imposed by a "socialist dictatorship"[16]—and available technical and economic means:

> Under capitalism, the system of piece-work and of grading, the application of the Taylor system, etc., have as their object to increase the exploitation of the workers by the squeezing out of surplus value. Under socialist production, piece-work, bonuses, etc., have as their problem to increase the volume of social product, and consequently to raise the general well-being. Those workers who do more for the general interests than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless, and the disorganizers.[17]

This isn't Stalin speaking (in 1939), it is Trotsky (in 1919).

The socialist reorganization of production during the initial period is inconceivable without some "work obligation"—who does not work does not eat. That is certain. There probably also will be an attempt to standardize the amount of effort furnished by various shops and enterprises, which would require the establishment of certain norms and indices of work. All Trotsky's sophisms about the fact that "free labor" has never existed in history and will not exist until there is full communism should not make anyone forget, however, the crucial question: *Who* establishes these norms? *Who* controls people's work obligations, and *who* punishes those who do not

fulfill these obligations? Will it be the organized collectives of laboring people? Or a specific social category, whose function therefore is to manage the work of others?

To manage the work of others—this is the beginning and the end of the whole cycle of exploitation. The "need" for a specific social category to manage the work of others in production (and the activity of others in politics and in society), the "need" for a separate business management and for a Party to rule the State—this is what Bolshevism proclaimed as soon as it seized power, and this is what it zealously labored to impose. We know that it achieved its ends. Insofar as ideas play a role in the development of history—and, *in the final analysis*, they play an enormous role—the Bolshevik ideology (and with it, the Marxist ideology lying behind it) was a decisive factor in the birth of the Russian bureaucracy.

Notes

1. See, among other articles, *RPR*, "L'Exploitation de la paysannerie sous le capitalisme bureaucratique" (*SB 1*, pp. 283–312), and *RPB* [T/E: *RPR* and "The Exploitation of the Peasantry under Bureaucratic Capitalism" appear in *PSW 1*; *PRAB* appears in *PSW 2*]; Claude Lefort, "Le Totalitarisme sans Staline" (*S. ou B.*, 19 [July 1956]; reprinted in *Eléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* [Geneva: Droz, 1971], pp. 130–90 [T/E: now available from Gallimard (Paris, 1979), pp. 155–235; abridged translation, "Totalitarianism without Stalin," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 52–88]).

2. The texts on the postindustrial Russian economy and society, which were announced in this note, will be published in *SB 3*. [T/E: This volume was never published. *Devant la guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), however, includes an updated analysis of the Russian economy and society.]

3. Beyond the texts cited in note 1, see *SB* and *CS I*.

4. When we speak of a "historical function" in this context, we are not doing metaphysics, nor are we making a posteriori rationalizations. This is an abbreviation for saying: Either Russia would have developed a modern form of large-scale industry or the new State would have been crushed in some conflict or other (at the latest, in 1941).

5. It is in this sense that there is an element of truth in the connection Trotsky establishes between bureaucracy and backwardness (a theme ponderously repeated today by [Isaac] Deutscher, for example). What one obviously forgets to add is that in that case it really is a matter of an *exploitative regime* that carries out the process of primitive accumulation.

6. One quotation among a hundred: "And history . . . has taken such a peculiar course that it *has given birth* in 1918 to two unconnected halves of socialism existing side by side like two future chickens in the single shell of international imperialism. In 1918 Germany and Russia have become the most striking embodiment of the material realization of the economic, the productive and the socio-economic conditions for socialism, on the one hand, and the political conditions, on the other" (V. I. Lenin, " 'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," in *Selected Works: One-Volume Edition* [New York: International Publishers, 1971], p. 444). [T/E: As when Castoriadis cited this passage in "The Relations of Production in Russia," *PSW 1*, p. 118, he omits Lenin's parenthetical swipe against "Menshevik blockheads." The careful reader might also note slight discrepancies between this English version of the quotation and that earlier one. My apologies. The above quotation is the one to be found in the volume cited. The version in *PSW 1* came from another edition of Lenin's *Selected Writings*, which I failed to alter after I changed the page citation to correlate with the one-volume edition.]

7. L[eon] Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 168.

8. Ibid., p. 260.

9. Ibid., p. 162.

10. Ibid., p. 109.

11. Ibid., p. 161 (reading "much" for "such").

12. Ibid., p. 110.

13. Ibid., p. 172 [T/E: We have retained the emphasis found in the French, but not in the English, translation].

14. Ibid., p. 162.

15. Ibid., p. 133.

16. Ibid., p. 149.

17. Ibid., p. 147.

a) This text served as the introduction to Alexandra Kollontai's "L'Opposition ouvrière," which was published in the same issue of *S. ou B.*; it was based on the 1921 English translation. A new French translation based on the original has now been announced [T/E: translated by Pierre Pascal (Paris: Seuil, 1974)]. Since then, Maurice Brinton of Solidarity has produced a remarkable work, *Bolsheviks and Worker's Control*, the French translation of which has just appeared in *Autogestion*, 24–25 (September-December 1973). [T/E: *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, 1917 to 1921; The State and Counter-Revolution* (to cite the full and correct title) was originally published by Solidarity in 1970. Black and Red (Detroit) reprinted this 86-page pamphlet in 1972 and again in 1975. Brinton's introduction to his Solidarity translation of Castoriadis's text notes that "the first English translation" of *The Workers Opposition in Russia* "had appeared (between April 22 and August 19, 1921) in successive issues of Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers Dreadnought*." Solidarity had reprinted this 1921 English translation in 1962. This Solidarity edition is now also available from Left Bank Books, Seattle, Washington.]

b) This statement can now admit of some nuances in light of more recent studies; see, for example, Brinton, *Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, and the works referred to in this pamphlet.

c) See, on this topic, Brinton's work, which we have already cited.

9
The Crisis of Modern Society

1. Introduction

The theme of the discussion today is "the crisis of modern society." I would like to start by evoking what appears to be a fantastic paradox concerning modern industrial society and the way people live and act in it. It is the contradiction between the apparent omnipotence of humanity over its physical environment (the fact that technique is becoming more and more powerful, that physical conditions are increasingly controlled, that we are able to extract more and more energy from matter) and, on the other hand, the tremendous chaos and sense of impotence concerning the proper affairs of society, the human affairs, the way social systems work, etc.

Let me give one or two examples. Today a scientist can tell you roughly how many galaxies exist within a radius of six billion light-years from the solar system. But Mr. MacMillan, then prime minister, did not know what was happening next door during the Profumo affair. This may seem just a joke but it epitomizes the whole situation in a rather striking manner. In the same way we are able to extract enormous amounts of energy out of tiny bits of matter, yet if in a factory or any other organization bosses try to extract one additional movement from the workers there is tremendous resistance, and eventually they may not succeed.

This is not to say that from the point of view of what one might call the "internal

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Lecture given in May 1965, in Tunbridge Wells (Kent, England) before the comrades and supporters of Solidarity. Published in roneotyped form by Solidarity in 1966. Translated from the English by me as "La Crise de la société moderne" in *CMR 2*, pp. 293–316. [T/E: We have reprinted the Solidarity text (*Solidarity Pamphlet* 23, 14 pp.) verbatim, except for the Americanization of English spellings and punctuation, a certain standardization of phrases, the alteration of nonidiomatic expressions, and the correction of a misprint.]

environment" of society there have not been changes, in some sense even big, progressive changes. So-called prosperity is more general than it was (though one ought to see more precisely what this prosperity consists of). There is a spreading of culture. There is an expanding society. There is better health, and so on. But here we meet a second paradox. It is that this society which produces so much—and where the population has, to some extent, a share in this expansion of wealth—that this society which has apparently created less cruel living conditions for most of the people who live in it does not present an image of greater satisfaction, of greater happiness for a greater number of people. People are dissatisfied, people are grumbling, people are protesting, constant conflicts exist. Even if dissatisfaction takes on different forms, this richer and more prosperous society possibly contains more tensions within it than most other societies we have known in history.

These paradoxes offer a first way of defining the crisis of modern society. But this is a superficial way of looking at the phenomena that confront us. If we go a bit deeper, we'll see that the crisis manifests itself at all levels of social life.

2. The Crisis of Values

Let's start with an aspect that traditional Marxists consider just part of the "superstructure" of society, as a derived and secondary phenomenon, but that we consider to be very important, namely, the crisis of social and human values.

No society can exist without a set of values that are recognized in practice and adhered to by the quasi totality of its members. The problem here is not to know if these values are right or wrong—or whether they conceal real mechanisms whereby some people succeed in exploiting others. For the cohesion, for the working of all the societies we have known—even of societies divided into classes—such a set of values has proved necessary. They are what constantly orients the actions and motives of people and makes them cohere into a social whole. This function cannot be ensured just by violence and coercion, nor even just by the penal law, which says "you ought not to do this, otherwise you go to prison." There must be something more. After all, the law only states what is prohibited. It cannot provide *positive* motives, a positive orientation enabling people to fill the content of social life.

Now we all know (it has been said for a long time but this does not diminish the importance of the phenomenon) that such a set of values, such a system of accepted goals and common beliefs as to what is right and what is wrong, what ought to be done or not done (irrespective of what the penal law says) hardly exists any more in today's society.

There was a problem in all societies, in all historical phases, about the place of man in the world and about the meaning of life in society and of life in general. Every period of history attempted to give an answer to these questions. The problem here is not whether these answers were right or wrong, but the mere fact that an answer was forthcoming gave a cohesion, a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning to the people living in these periods. But today there is no clear answer. We know very well that religious values are out, for all purposes practically finished. What used to be called moral values (inasmuch as they can be distinguished from religious

values) are also practically finished. Are there really any accepted moral standards left in today's society?

At the level of officialty, of the powers that be, of the press, etc., there is just an official hypocrisy that almost explicitly recognizes itself as sheer hypocrisy and does not even take its own standards seriously. And in society at large there is an extremely widespread cynicism, constantly fed by the examples provided by social life (scandals and so on). The general idea is that you can do anything and that nothing is wrong, provided you can get away with it, provided that you are not caught.

What in Western Europe had appeared for some time to be a sort of universal value welding society together, namely the idea of the nation, of national power, of national grandeur, is no longer an accepted value. What was after all its real basis—or the pretence of a real basis—has disappeared. In the past it was often a mystification when great nations pretended that they were playing important roles in world affairs. But today no nation can claim this except for America and Russia. And even for them this "leading role in world affairs" is clearly seen as being just an entanglement in the impasse of nuclear power.

Could knowledge or art provide values for society today? First of all let us not forget that knowledge and art are important or have meaning, at least today, for only very limited strata of the population. More generally, in history, whenever art has played a role in social life, it has never been as an end in itself. It has been as part of a community that was expressing its life in this art. This was the case in the Elizabethan period. It was the case in the Renaissance. It was the case in ancient Greece. The Greeks or the people during the Renaissance did not live for art, but they put great value into their art because they recognized themselves and their problems in it. Their whole life had a meaning that was expressed in its highest forms in this artistic creation.

What about knowledge? Again in the strict sense, it is limited today to a small minority. And there is a tremendous crisis developing in science. This has followed the increasing division within particular spheres of knowledge, the increasing specialization, the fact that a scientist today is necessarily someone who knows more and more about less and less. At least among scientists who take a broad view there is a deep feeling of crisis in relation to what even yesterday was considered to be the solid basis of factual knowledge. Newton thought he was discovering eternal truth, that he was reading a page out of the eternal book of nature or of God's creation. Today no scientist believes that in discovering a "law" he is discovering an eternal truth. He only knows that he will perhaps be the object of three lines in a history of physics or of chemistry where it will be said "attempts to explain the peculiarities of this experiment by W. in 1965, provided some hopes that led to theory X. This however was later superseded by the construction of theories Y and Z."

Scientists themselves, like Oppenheimer, for instance, are dramatically aware of yet another aspect of the crisis. It is that with this specialization they have not only isolated themselves from the whole of society but that they have also isolated themselves *from each other*. There is no longer any scientific community with a common language. As soon as you go beyond the limits of a specialty people cannot really communicate, because there is so little common ground.

What is happening in these circumstances? What values today does society pro-

pose to its citizens? The only value that survives is consumption. The acquisition of more and more or newer and newer things is supposed completely to fill peoples' lives, to orient their effort, to make them stick to work, etc. I won't dwell much on all this, which you all know very well. I'll only stress how much all this—even as a mystification—is only a partial and unsatisfactory answer. Already today people cannot fill their lives just by working to earn more money, in order to buy more modern TV sets, and so on and so forth. This is felt more and more. The profound reason for this feeling is of course that in its content this consumption does not express organic human needs. It is more and more manipulated, so that purchases can become an outlet for the ever-growing mass production of consumer goods. This whole pattern of existence almost by definition becomes absurd. The value of having newer and more things is caught up in a process of perpetual self-refutation. It has no end. The only point is to have something more, something newer. People become aware of what in the United States is now called "the rat race." You just try to earn more so that you can consume more than the neighbors. You somehow value yourself more than the neighbors because you have a higher consumption standard, and so on.

3. Work

Now let us try to see how the crisis manifests itself in the sphere of people's activity. We can start first of all by examining what has happened to work.

Since the beginning of capitalism the permanent tendency has been to destroy work as a meaningful activity. What previously might have been the relation of, say, the peasant to his land, or of the artisan to the object he was making, has been progressively destroyed with the industrial revolution, with the division of labor, with the chaining of people to extremely partial aspects of the production process. Together with this has developed the constant and ever-growing attempt by capitalist firms, and now by the managerial bureaucracy, to intervene more and more deeply in the labor process. They seek to direct it from the outside, not only to direct the final results of the work, the ends and the methods of production, but even precisely to define the gestures of the workers through time study, through motion study, and so forth. This has been established practice now, in Western industry, for over half a century. The meaning of work has not only been destroyed from, so to speak, the *objective* side. Nobody any longer produces a thing, an object. People just produce components, the precise destination of which is often unknown to them. The meaning of work has also been destroyed on the *subjective* side, in the sense that even when producing a bit, at least in the system as it exists, you are not supposed to have a say as to how to produce this particular bit.

Now this development, this destruction of the meaning of work (which is a necessary concomitant of the whole system) has very important effects. It manifests itself as a subjective alienation of the worker from the work process, through the fact that the worker feels both like an outsider and at the same time like a manipulated person. It also manifests itself socially, one could almost say objectively, because, despite all, modern production requires the active participation of men both as individuals and as groups.

The real subject of modern production is less and less the individual worker. It is the group, the team of workers. Now at this level you again have the same phenomenon. The existing management of production does not want to accept the fact that the real unit of the work is more and more a team, a collectivity, because the resistance of a group to imposed rules of work and to attempts to destroy the meaning of work is greater. It is much easier to manipulate people at the individual level. A contradiction is engendered.

The crisis of modern work is not only expressed as misery on the part of the worker, but as an objective impasse of the production process. Modern production requires the active participation of men both as individuals and as groups. Yet the methods that are *necessarily* established by the system as it functions today seek to destroy this very participation at the same time as they require it. The manifestations of this phenomenon are both an immense waste in production and a permanent conflict in industry between people who merely carry out instructions and those who direct them.

4. Political Alienation

Now let us pass to another sphere: the sphere of politics. Everybody is familiar with the crisis of politics. It has been talked about for a long time, under the term "apathy." What is apathy and what are its roots?

After a certain historical development, both the State and various other institutions (like local government) became increasingly bureaucratized, like everything else in modern society. Political organizations – not only the bourgeois, conservative political organizations, but the political organizations created by the working class to struggle against the ruling class and their State – and even the trade unions were involved in this process. Irrespective of its other aspects, this bureaucratization meant that people were excluded from their own affairs.

The fate of trade unions is now more or less left to appointed officials, to people elected for long periods. These people act in such a way that the rank and file are prevented from expressing their views. They are prevented from having any genuine activity within the union. The rank and file serve as a sort of support, paying fees and obeying orders. From time to time they are even given orders to strike. But they aren't supposed to have a real say in all this. By a natural reaction the rank and file estranges itself from the organization, be it the trade union or the Party.

I don't know how far this has already gone in Britain, but on the Continent we are familiar with trade-union branch meetings where the two or three appointed officials turn up and perhaps half a dozen other persons, out of two hundred people who were supposed to be there. Now, of course, when this happens a sort of vicious circle is set up. The bureaucracy argues, "You see! We call upon people to come along and discuss their affairs. They don't! Somebody has to take over to solve all these problems. So we do it. We do it *for* them, not for our own sake." This is partly propaganda and self-justification by the bureaucracy, but it is also partly true. What is not usually seen is that this vicious circle always started at some specific point where the wish and tendency of people actively to participate, to take over their own

affairs, was opposed and finally destroyed by the will of the bureaucracy, using all the means at its disposal.

The same thing happens in the purely political organizations. These are bureaucratized. They keep people away from active participation except in periods of "crisis" when the rulers may suddenly call on people to help. This is exactly what de Gaulle did in France, in 1960. He appealed over the radio: Help me against the revolt in Algiers! Of course, he had previously produced a constitution whereby the population would be kept firmly in place for seven years. Then, just like that, when a crisis arose, he called for help. Did he expect people to take the equivalent of their Morris Minors to the airport and help fight the parachutists from Algiers?[1]

There is a growing consciousness in the population at large that politics today is just a manipulation of people, a manipulation of society to serve specific interests. The phrase "they are all the same gang" (which you often hear "apathetic" or "nonpolitical" people use) expresses first of all an objective truth. It also expresses, as a first approximation, a very correct attitude. It has been perceived, after all, that those who compete to rule society are all part of the same gang.

This was even recognized, during the 1959 general election, by the serious bourgeois press (papers like the *Economist* and the *Guardian*). They complained that there was no discernible difference between the Tory and Labor programs. This was very bad, because the beauty of British democracy was that it worked on a system of two parties. But in order to have *two* parties you must have *something* that makes the two parties really two, and not just two faces of the same gang. There must be *some* real differences, at least in what they say, if not in what they do. Today these "differences" are less and less.

What is the end result? Parties (and, in the case of the United States, presidents) cannot claim support on the basis of ideas or of programs. Presidents or parties are now sold to the population, like various brands of toothpaste. An "image" of Kennedy, or of Johnson, of Sir Alec or of Wilson is created. Public relations experts ask themselves, "Isn't Wilson coming over as too much of an egghead? Shouldn't he say something or other to correct this impression? What should he do to get support from that 5 percent sector of the electorate who really likes Sir Alec because he is rather stupid and who don't want a prime minister who is too clever? Shouldn't Wilson try to say something stupid next time?"

In the end politics becomes practically undistinguishable from any other form of advertising or sale of products. In this respect the products are immaterial, though they matter in other respects.

I will not dwell on the fact that all this does not just create a subjective crisis. It isn't just that we resent the fact that society is run this way. All this has objective repercussions. In an Italian town, during the Renaissance, a tyrant might have succeeded in keeping the population cowed. But a modern society, with its established rules and deep-seated institutions, cannot be managed on this basis, even from the point of view of the rulers themselves. It cannot be run with the total abstention of the population from *any* intervention or *any* control in politics, for there is then no control by reality on the politicians. They run amok and the result is, for instance, Suez. Here again the crisis impinges upon the workings of society itself.

5. Family Relationships

Another field in which the crisis manifests itself very deeply is that of family relationships. We all know the big changes that have been going on in this respect. The traditional standards, the morality, the behavior that characterized the patriarchal family and that prevailed in Western Europe till the turn of the century are breaking down. The pivotal factor, namely the authority of the man, of the father, is breaking down. Sex morals, as they existed, are disintegrating. The relations between parents and children, as they existed traditionally, are being more and more disrupted. And in a certain sense nothing is put in their place.

We ought to stop for a minute and seek to understand what this really means. I would like to be clearly understood. Of course the patriarchal family and the corresponding morals were, from our point of view, absurd, inhuman, alienated. That's one level of discussion. But at a deeper level, the question is not of our judgment. A society cannot function harmoniously unless relations between men and women and the upbringing of children are somehow regulated (I don't mean, of course, a mechanistic, legal regulation) in a manner that allows people to live their lives as individuals of one sex with the other, in a manner that allows new generations to be procreated and brought up without coming into conflict with the existing social arrangements.

This "functional" aspect of the family existed in the patriarchal family. It existed, or could have existed, in a matriarchal family. It exists in a Moslem polygamic family. The question here is not of making judgments. In these societies there were ways of solving—and not just legalistically solving—the problem of the relations between man and woman, between parents and children. These methods combined the legal aspects, the economic aspects, the sexual aspects, and deeper psychological (what one might call the Freudian) aspects of the creation of human beings, more or less adapted to the existing form of social life. But today what was providing this type of cohesion, namely, the traditional patriarchal family, is more and more broken down. And with it are broken down all its concomitants: traditional sex morals, traditional relations between the father and the mother, traditional relations between parents and children.

At first sight nothing emerges to replace the traditional concepts. This creates an enormous crisis that manifests itself in some readily discernible forms like the breaking up of families, the homeless children, the tremendous problem of youth today, the "*blousons noirs*" (mods and rockers), and so on. All this goes extremely deep. In a certain sense what is at stake here is the very problem of the continuation of society. I don't mean just biological reproduction, but the reproduction of personalities having a certain relation to their environment.

From the point of view of the whole nexus of problems that exist around the family, sex, parents, children, men and women, and so on, nobody knows for certain what he or she is expected to do. What is his or her role? What, for instance, is the place of the woman in today's society? You can make her one of fifteen wives in a harem, you can make her the Victorian matron, you can make her the Greek woman in the gynaeceum, but somehow or other she has to have a certain place in society. You can say, as Hitler did, that her place is in the kitchen with the children and/or

in church. This is coherent. It is inhuman, it is barbaric, but it is coherent. But what is the place of the woman in today's society? Is it to be just like a man, with a small physical difference? Is she to be a person who has to work most of the time? Or is she primarily a wife and mother? Or is she both? And can she be both? Is it feasible? Is society creating the conditions whereby this would become feasible? Total uncertainty about these matters creates a tremendous crisis concerning the status and even the personality of women. It creates a complete disorientation that literally and immediately affects men. Men have a sort of privilege in this respect, in the sense that they appear more or less to continue in their traditional role. They are outside, earning a living. But that's a fallacious appearance, because men and women in this respect are abstractions. What happens to women affects men. You can't define the two beings except in relation to each other.

The most dramatic effect of this uncertainty is upon the younger generations. Through largely unconscious mechanisms, about which we know something today, thanks to Sigmund Freud, children take models, identify themselves with this or that parental figure according to sex. Perhaps they even do this in a wider family context than just in relation to the biological father and mother. But this presupposes that developing children find before them a woman-mother and a man-father with patterns of behavior, attitudes, and roles that even if not defined in black and white nevertheless correspond to something fairly clear and certain. Inasmuch as all this is more and more questioned in today's society, children cannot grow up with the help of this process of identification, a process that is partly necessary, though it can be seen as alienating, as well. Development today is not, as before, helped by the parental figures.

The child was helped by these figures. In a certain sense it chose out of them what corresponded to its own nature. At any rate it used to find a structured character, a *person*, in the deepest sense of the word, in front of it. The child used to develop in relation to these persons even if, as in previous generations, it struggled against them. But today the situation is like a haze. There is increasing uncertainty as to what a man and a woman really are, in their reciprocal polar definitions, as to what their roles are, as to what the relations between them should be.

An immediate consequence is, of course, the total uncertainty that dominates relations between parents and children. There are still families where the old autarchic, patriarchal attitudes and habits prevail, where the remnants of the old ideas persist, where parents have a sort of master power over the children. Even more, the family is still sometimes seen as an object in the possession of the father, of the paterfamilias. This was the attitude of the Romans, but in fact it persisted in Western Europe for a very long time. In a certain sense, the children and even the wife existed *for* the father. He could do with them as he wanted, what he liked. With limitations, this attitude persists in some quarters. Of course it comes into conflict with the attitudes of children and young people today, of the teenagers, who are in revolt against it.

In other families, there is the opposite extreme: disintegration. Children just grow up. The parents play no role whatsoever, except perhaps providing pocket money, shelter, and food. One doesn't see what on earth they are there for, once they have procreated the children. In these conditions one might as well say, "Let us na-

tionalize the children as soon as they are born." In a certain sense the role of the parental couple in relation to the children has disappeared.

In the majority of instances conditions are somewhere in between. The parents are in perplexity, not knowing what to do and often giving brutal alternate strokes of the wheel to left or right, in their attempts to guide the education of the children. They are "liberal" one day. And the next day they are shouting, "This is enough. From tomorrow you will be in at 7 o'clock every evening." Then, of course, there is a crisis. And after the crisis they make concessions. And so on and so forth.

Those who recognize the negative results of all this on the social fabric today will easily understand that unless something happens the effects will be multiplied to the n^{th} degree, when the children of today will have to produce and bring up children of their own.

6. Education

There is an equivalent to all this in the problem of education. The traditional relationship, well expressed in the words "master" and "pupil," is being disrupted. It is less and less tolerated by young people. The teacher or professor is no longer in the real position of master toward the class, as he still was thirty years ago. But in the existing system it is impossible to shift over to another relationship. It is impossible really to admit a new relationship between adults and children.

Although the adult is necessary for the education of the children, the relationship must be shaped in a completely new way. The children's community ought to be able to acquire the capacity to manage its own affairs, and even in a certain sense to manage its own process of education, only having adults there to learn from, to borrow from, and, in a sense, to use. Some attempts at modern pedagogy recognize all this, but their attempts are limited by the whole social framework. We have a crisis in education in this respect.

We also have a crisis in education in another respect, namely in relation to the content of education. This is not just the crisis in the relations between educator and educated. It is a crisis concerning what education is about.

In the nineteenth century there was something in the conduct and content of education that corresponded more or less to a neat division of society into classes. For the children of the "higher" classes you had the humanities and secondary education. For the children of the "lower" classes there was elementary education, just enough to enable them to understand factory work, the bare minimum. Today, both these objectives are in crisis.

In a certain sense the humanities are out-of-date. There has been a tremendous degradation of "classical" education. No one is capable of showing the relevance of humanities to life today. Is there any relevance? Perhaps there is, but only a really living society could restore for itself the meaning of the past. Otherwise the meaning of the past becomes something completely external. It becomes, "Let us look at the Renaissance, let us look at the Elizabethans or at the Greeks. They were living in a harmonious world, contrary to our own." And that's all. It is not really possible to translate into today's terms the meaning of past cultures.

On the other hand, it is impossible for the expanding and exploding technology

of today to leave general education at the present level. People who are going to enter modern industry must have technical skills, must know more, even if only about techniques. Their educational needs are increasing at a tremendous rate. How is this to be dealt with? The solutions found in today's society are all internally contradictory. One solution consists in trying to give to the children an essentially technical education. For reasons that concern the whole setup of society and that are partly economic, you have to start this specialization very early. But this is not only extremely destructive for the personality of the children, it is also self-destructive. It is self-destructive in the sense that given today's rate of technological development and change, you cannot have people whom you have, so to speak, allocated once and for all to a very limited specialty. This type of educational crisis expresses itself in industry through the increasing demand for programs for adult re-education, in the demand for what's now called a "permanent educational process." But in order to be able to absorb in later life whatever this "permanent educational process" may offer (if it ever materializes), you must have as general a grounding as possible. It is obvious that if the basis on which you start is extremely narrow, then further education becomes an impossible proposition. Here again there is a sort of internal conflict that illustrates the crisis [at] this level.

7. Some Conclusions

Let us try to sum up. All that we have discussed impinges upon the two basic concepts, the two polar categories that create society: the personality of man and the structure of the social fabric and its cohesion.

At the *personal* level the crisis manifests itself as a sort of radical crisis in the meaning of life and of human motives. It is no accident that modern art and literature are more and more, if I may use the expression, "full of the void." In the *social* attitudes of people, the crisis shows itself in the destruction and disappearance of responsibility. There is a tremendous crisis of socialization. There is the phenomenon that we call privatization: people are, so to speak, withdrawing into themselves. There is practically no community life, ties become extremely disrupted, and so on. As a reaction to this there are new phenomena, for instance youth gangs, that express the need for positive socialization. But socialization in the more general sense, that is, the feeling that what is going on at large is, after all, our own affair, that we do have to do something about it, that we ought to be responsible, all this is deeply disturbing. This disruption contributes to a vicious circle. It increases apathy and multiplies its effects.

Now there is another very important side to all these phenomena of crisis. The time left does not allow me to do more than mention it. When we talk of crisis, we should understand that it is not a physical calamity that has fallen upon contemporary society. If there is a crisis, it is because people do *not* submit passively to the present organization of society but react and struggle against it, in a great many ways. And, equally important, this reaction, this struggle of the people, contains the seeds of the new. It inevitably produces new forms of life and of social relations. In this sense, the crisis we have been describing is but the by-product of struggle.

Take, for instance, the changing position of women. Certainly, at the origin of

the disruption of the old patriarchal order, there had been the technical and economic development of modern society, industrialization, etc. Capitalism had destroyed the old family pattern by drawing women into the factory, then taking them out of it, etc. But this is only part of the story. All this could very well have left the old order unchanged, if women had not reacted in a given way to the new situation. And that is precisely what happened. Women, after a while, started demanding another sort of place in society. They did not accept the old patriarchal state of affairs. And I don't mean the suffragettes, Lady Astor, etc. There had been a silent pushing and struggle going on over fifty years or more. Women have finally conquered a sort of equivalence to men in the home. Girls have conquered the right to do as they like with themselves without being considered "prostitutes," etc.

The same is true about youth. The revolt of youth has been conditioned by the whole development of society. At a certain stage the teenagers no longer accepted treatment as mere objects of the father, of the parents, of the persons who were their "masters" till they were twenty-one, till they were married, till they earned a living, etc. Young people more or less conquered this position.

In these fields of the family, of relations between sexes, and of the parent-child relationship, something new is emerging. People are struggling to define for themselves (although not in explicit terms) a sort of recognition of the autonomy of the other person, of the responsibility of each one for his own life. There is an attempt to understand the other person, to accept people as they are, irrespective of legal obligations or of the absence of legal obligations (of whether adultery is forbidden or not forbidden, for instance). People are trying to materialize this in their lives. They are attempting to construct the couple's relationship on the concrete reality of the two persons involved, on their real will and desires and not on the basis of external constraints.

I think that there are also hopes when you look at the development of relationships between parents and children. There is a sort of recognition that the children exist for themselves, now, and not only when they are twenty-one. There is a gradual realization that if you have produced children, you have not produced them only to extend your own personality (just as you have been dominated all day by the boss at work), where you can say "I am master here. Shut up." There is an awareness that if you are procreating children, you are procreating them for themselves, that they have a right to as much freedom as they can exert at each and every stage, that you don't make them obey formal rules or your own arbitrary will.

The same thing is true about work. If there is a crisis in modern industry, it is not just because the system is irrational or even because it exploits people. It is because people *react*. They react in two ways. First of all they constitute what industrial sociologists have long known as "informal groups and organizations." That is, they constitute teams of work, they establish informal connections in order to get the work done. These cut across official channels and undermine the official mechanisms for transmitting orders. Workers find ways and means of doing their work that are not only different from but often even opposed to the official ones. More and more, in modern industrial societies, workers react through open struggle. This is the meaning of unofficial strikes concerning conditions of work, conditions of life in the factory, and control of the production process. However minor

these issues may appear, they are really very important. Their meaning is that people refuse to be dominated and that they manifest a will to take their lives into their own hands.

So we see that the crisis of modern society is not without issue. It contains the seeds of something new, which is emerging even now. But the new will not come about automatically. Its emergence will be assisted by the actions of people in society, by their permanent resistance and struggle, and by their often unconscious activity. But the new will not complete itself, will not be able to establish itself as a new social system, as a new pattern of social life, unless at some stage it becomes a *conscious* activity, a *conscious* action of the mass of the people. For us, to help initiate this conscious action and to help it develop, whenever it may manifest itself, is the real new meaning to be given to the words "revolutionary politics."

Note

1. T/E: A Morris Minor is the British equivalent to the Renault 2CV (the term Castoriadis uses in his French translation of this article), a small automobile affordable for people of limited means. The "parachutists from Algiers" refers to the revolt of the OAS (Secret Army Organization) against President Charles de Gaulle's government.

10
The Suspension of Publication of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*

The first issue of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* appeared in March 1949, the fortieth in June 1965. Contrary to what we thought when we published it, this fortieth issue will be, at least for the time being, the last.

In suspending the publication of the review for an indeterminate period of time, which we decided[1] after a considerable amount of reflection and not without some pain, we are not motivated by difficulties of a financial nature. Such difficulties have existed for our group from the very first day. And they have never ceased. Also, they have always been overcome, and would have continued to be overcome, had we decided to go on publishing the review. If we suspend its publication today, it is because the meaning of our enterprise, under its present form, has become for us problematic. This is what we wish to set forth briefly to those who, as subscribers and readers of the review, have followed our efforts for a long time.

Socialisme ou Barbarie was never a review of pure theoretical research. If the elaboration of ideas has always occupied a central place in its pages, it has always been guided by a political aim. Already, the subtitle of the review, "organ of revolutionary criticism and orientation," adequately indicates the status of the theoretical labor expressed therein these last eighteen years. Nourishing itself upon revolutionary activity both individual and collective, it derived its value from the fact that it was—or could, foreseeably, become—pertinent for such activity. This activity was one of interpreting and elucidating what is real and what is possible from the standpoint of the transformation of society. The review made sense for us and in itself only as a moment and as a tool of a revolutionary political project.

Now, from this standpoint, the real social conditions—in any case, what we per-

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"La Suspension de la publication de *Socialisme ou Barbarie*," originally published as a circular addressed to the subscribers and readers of *S. ou B.* in June 1967. Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 417–25.

ceive of them – have changed to a greater and greater extent. We have already noted this since 1959 – as can be seen in the series of articles entitled "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" – and the subsequent changes have served only to confirm this diagnosis: in the societies of modern capitalism, political activity properly called is tending to disappear. Those who have read us know that this is not some simple statement of fact, but the product of an analysis of what in our opinion are the most profound characteristics of modern societies.

What appeared to us to be a compensating factor for this negative diagnosis, that which balanced, in our view, the growing privatization of the mass of the population, were struggles at the point of production, which we have concretely noted and analyzed in the cases of American and English industry. These struggles put into question the work relations extant under the system of capitalism and express, in an embryonic form, the self-directing [*gestionnaire*] tendencies of working people. We thought that these struggles would develop in France, too, and, above all, that they would be able – though certainly not without an intervention and introduction of the genuine political element – to go beyond the immediate sphere of work relations and to progress toward an attempt to put explicitly into question social relations in general.

In this we were wrong. Such a development did not take place in France, except on a minute scale (the strikes of late, which rapidly were taken over by the trade unions, do not change our judgment on this matter). In England, where these strikes continue (with their inevitable ups and downs), their character has not changed, neither on their own nor in terms of the activity of our comrades in the Solidarity group.

Certainly, a different evolution in the future is not ruled out, although it appears to us improbable for reasons that we will mention below. That, however, is not the key question. We believe that we have adequately shown that we are not impatient, and we never have thought, let us repeat it, that the transformation of this type of workers' struggles – or of any other kind – could occur without a parallel development of a new political organization, which it has always been our intention to construct.

Now, the construction of such a political organization under the conditions in which we live – and in which, no doubt, we take part – was and remains impossible due to a series of factors that are in no way accidental in character and that are in fact closely interconnected.

In a society where radical political conflict is more and more masked, stifled, deflected, and sometimes even nonexistent, a political organization, should one be built, could only falter and degenerate rapidly. For, we may ask, first of all, where and in what stratum of the population could such a political organization find that immediate setting necessary for its survival? We have had a negative experience, regarding both a working-class membership and an intellectual membership. As to the former, even when they view a political group sympathetically and recognize in its ideas the expression of their own experience, it is not their habit to maintain permanent contact with it, still less active association, for its political views, insofar as these go beyond their own immediate preoccupations, seem to them obscure, gratuitous, and excessive. For the others – the intellectuals – what in particular they

seem capable of satisfying when they come into contact with a political group is their curiosity and their "need for information." We should state here clearly that we have never had, on the part of the public readership of the review, the kind of response we had hoped for, which could have aided us in our work; the attitude of this public has remained, save for the rarest of exceptions, that of passive consumers of ideas. Such an attitude coming from the public, which is perfectly compatible with the role and the aims of a review presented in a traditional style, in the long run renders the existence of a review such as *Socialisme ou Barbarie* impossible.

And who, under these circumstances, will join a revolutionary political organization? Our experience has been that those who came to us—basically young people—often did so based, if not on a misunderstanding, at least on motivations that derived much more from an emotional [*affective*] revolt and from a need to break with the isolation to which society today condemns individuals than from a lucid and firm adherence to a revolutionary project. This initial motivation perhaps is as good as any other; what really matters is that the same conditions for the absence of properly political activity also prevent this motivation from being transformed into something more solid.

Finally, in this context how can such a political organization, supposing it existed, check what it says and what it proposes to do? How can it develop new organizational means and new means of action? How can it enrich, in a living dialectic of praxis with society as a whole, what it draws from its own substance? Above all, how, in the present phase of history, after the colossal and complete bankruptcy of the instruments, methods, and practices of the movement of former times, could it reconstruct a new political practice, faced as it is with the total silence of society? At best it could maintain an abstract theoretical discourse; at worst, it might produce one of these strange mixtures of sectarian obsessiveness, pseudoactivist hysteria, and interpretive delirium of which, by the dozens, "extreme left-wing" groups throughout the world still offer today all conceivable sorts of specimens.

Nothing allows one to count on a rapid change in this situation. Here is not the place to show this through a long and involved analysis (the basic elements of which are to be found already formulated in the last ten issues of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*). What must be emphasized, however, is the tremendous burden weighing down upon reality and upon present prospects: the profound depoliticization and privatization of modern society; the accelerated transformation of workers into mere employees, with the consequences that follow at the level of struggles at the point of production; the blurring of the contours of class boundaries, which renders the coincidence of economic and political objectives more and more problematic.

This overall situation—which acts as an obstacle on another terrain, that of the crisis of culture and of daily life, as has been emphasized in the review for a number of years—may develop and take the form of a positive collective reaction against alienation in modern society. Because any form of political activity, even in embryo, is impossible today, this reaction does not succeed in taking form. It is condemned to remain individual in character, or else is quickly diverted toward a delirious set of folkloric practices that no longer succeed even in shocking people. Deviance never has been revolutionary; today it is no longer even deviance, but serves merely as the indispensable negative complement of "cultural" publicity.

As one knows, for the past ten years these phenomena, more or less clearly perceived and analyzed, have pushed certain people to transfer their hopes onto the underdeveloped countries. We have said for a long time in the review why this transfer is illusory: if the modern part of the world were irremediably rotten, it would be absurd to think that a revolutionary destiny for humanity could be fulfilled in the other part. In fact, in all these underdeveloped countries, either a social movement of the masses has not succeeded in getting off the ground, or else it can do so only in becoming bureaucratized.

Whether it be a matter of its modern half or its starving half, the same question hangs suspended over the contemporary world: Has people's immense capacity for deluding themselves about what they are and what they want changed in any way over the past century? Marx thought that reality would force man to "face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind." We know that reality has revealed itself not to be up to the task the great thinker thus conferred upon it. Freud believed that progress in the field of knowledge and what he called "our god logos" would permit man to modify gradually his relationship to the obscure forces he bears within him. We have relearned since then that the relation between knowledge and the way people effectively act—both as individuals and as collectivities—is anything but simple and that the Marxian and Freudian forms of knowledge also have been able to become the source of new mystifications. And they become so again and again with each new day. Over a century of historical experience—and at all levels, from the most abstract to the most empirical—prohibits us from believing in a positive automatic functioning of history or in man's cumulative conquest of himself by himself in terms of any kind of sedimentation of knowledge. We draw from this no skeptical or "pessimistic" conclusion. Nevertheless, the relationship of people to their theoretical and practical creations; the relationship between knowledge, or better lucidity, and real activity; the possibility of constituting an autonomous society; the fate of the revolutionary project and its potential for laying down roots in an evolving society such as ours—these questions, and the many others they call forth, must thoroughly be rethought. Revolutionary activity will again become possible only when a radical ideological reconstruction will become capable of meeting up with a real social movement.

We thought that this reconstruction—the elements for which have already been layed down in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*—could be carried out at the same time that a revolutionary political organization was being constructed. This today proves to be impossible, and we ought to draw from it the appropriate conclusions. The theoretical work—more necessary than ever, though it henceforth presents other exigencies and involves another rhythm—cannot serve as the axis upon which the existence of an organized group and a periodical review revolves. We would be the last to fail to appreciate the risks immanent in a theoretical enterprise separated from real activity. Present circumstances, however, would permit us to maintain at best only a useless and sterile simulacrum of this activity.

We will continue, each in our own area, to reflect and to act in terms of the certainties and of the interrogations that *Socialisme ou Barbarie* has permitted us to sift out. If we do it well, and if social conditions are propitious, we are certain that we

will one day be able to recommence our enterprise upon more solid grounds and in a different relation to those who have followed our work.[a]

Notes

1. With the exception of four comrades from the group, who, for their part, project to undertake a publication claiming its kinship with the ideas of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and who will send to subscribers and readers of the review a text setting forth their intentions.

[T/E: No text was ever sent, and no new publication was forthcoming. However, the "four comrades from the group" who dissented from the decision to suspend publication of S. ou B. and to dissolve the group did continue to meet during the year leading up to the events of May 1968. I have investigated this obscure group and its rather brief history, and I wish to summarize my findings to date. My sources were interviews with three of the four dissenting members (Danièle Auffray, Christian Descamps, and Alain Guillerm). The probable fourth member, Beno Sarel, a member of S. ou B. from its inception and author of *La Classe ouvrière en Allemagne orientale* (Paris: Editions ouvrières, 1958), is now deceased. Recollections differ, and I have been unable to reconstruct a full membership list of S. ou B. at the time of the group's demise with which everyone would agree.

Descamps and Guillerm joined the group together in 1962. They were student leaders of the Parti Socialiste Unifié's youth wing (JSU). Auffray, who is now the wife of Guillerm, joined in 1964, soon after the tendency/antitendency scission.

In 1967, Guillerm presented the minority position on the question of the group's dissolution (it seems that internal texts relating to this question no longer exist). As Guillerm now recounts the debate, Castoriadis merely provided a pessimistic assessment of the group's passive readership and of the general political situation. The present circular, sent to the readers of the review, is more nuanced and raises what for Castoriadis has been the central concern of *S. ou B.* since the group's first issue, when he supplemented the "famous adage, 'without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary action,'" with this dictum: "without *development* of revolutionary theory, no development of revolutionary action" ("Présentation," in *S. ou B.*, 1 [March 1949], p. 4; reprinted in *SB 1*, p. 134). Guillerm informs me that he argued, not without prescience, that there would soon be a student explosion in France and that S. ou B. should be preparing to support it. The role of the journal and its theoretical debates and developments was not for him as central a feature of the group's activity.

The group formed by the dissenting S. ou B. members called itself Communisme ou Barbarie. It met frequently in the Marais section of Paris, managed to be denounced by the Situationist International during its brief existence, and picked up a few new members, including Dominique Frager, who had wanted to join S. ou B. soon before its dissolution. Contacts also were established with people from Noir et Rouge, the Situationists, and radical students from Germany, among others.

Right before Christmas, 1967, Frager introduced the group to the soon-to-be student leader of May '68, Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Cohn-Bendit, who subsequently has written that "I am not, and do not want to be, anything but a plagiarist when it comes to preaching of revolutionary theory," and that "the views we have been presenting are those of P. Chaulieu" (Castoriadis's pseudonym; see p. viii and note 3 of my foreword, *PSW 1*), thus was in direct contact with the group that made itself the continuator of Socialisme ou Barbarie in the months leading to the March 22 takeover of the Nanterre University Administration building and to May '68. To my knowledge, this quite slender, but significant, thread of historical continuity has never before been revealed in print.

Also of significance, Guillerm participated in the Nanterre occupation on March 22 and in the formation of the March 22nd Movement. He was on the barricades the first evening in Paris.

I will not attempt here an assessment of the opposing arguments. I will merely summarize very briefly the two views.

Castoriadis's position on May '68 is presented in the next chapter of the present volume, "The Anticipated Revolution"; in the second-to-last paragraph of "The Evolution of the French Communist Party," chapter 18 in the present volume; in "General Introduction" (*GI*, in *PSW 1*, pp. 32–36); and in "The Movements of the Sixties," *Thesis Eleven*, 18/19 (1987), pp. 20–31. He stresses in the first of these texts the *absence* of a significant, coherent revolutionary group in May '68, which nevertheless was needed, in his opinion, to orient the student radicals and to broaden their contestation of the "established disorder,"

but which was unable to become established due to prevailing conditions; the generally passive and mystified role played by the French working class in what appeared at first sight to be a straightforward student-worker rebellion; and the need for a further development and a broadening of revolutionary theory, as evidenced, in retrospect, precisely by the student radicals' turn toward Trotskyist and Maoist microbureaucracies in the aftermath of May '68.

Guillerm summarizes his own views in a review of *SB 1*, the first volume of the writings of Castoriadis in the 10/18 series: "It is this absence of a response to the alternative *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (?) that brought about the dissolution of the group of the same name. A revolutionary group could not live indefinitely in a state of uncertainty as regards the revolution. We thought at the time that this dissolution, announced in a circular 'To the subscribers and readers of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*' dated June 1967, was an error and we still think so. A year before May '68, Socialisme ou Barbarie could have done something other than dissolve itself" ("Le Retour de 'Socialisme et Barbarie,' " *L'Homme et la société*, 29/30 [July 1973], p. 311). Guillerm believes that such organizations as *Spartacus*, *Autogestion*, and *Autonomie Ouvrière* continued the revolutionary tradition, of which *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was a part, into the 1970s, and he does not share Castoriadis's negative assessment of the student radicals' turn toward microbureaucracies. The role of the development of revolutionary theory was not directly broached in my interview, but Guillerm's pamphlet *Le Luxembourgisme aujourd'hui: Rosa Luxemburg et les conseils ouvriers* (*Spartacus* pamphlet, 2nd series, no. 32 [March 1970], 60 pp.) is indicative of the gulf separating Castoriadis's conception of such a development from Guillerm's views at the time (Guillerm says he never shared Castoriadis's critique of Luxemburg's Marxism [see, e.g., Castoriadis's discussion of Luxemburg in "The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement," chapter 12, this volume]). Guillerm concludes his introduction to that pamphlet with an affirmation of the contemporary relevance of the "Luxemburg/Lenin opposition" to the split "between leftists and the French Communist party, *even when the former use a Leninist form*" (p. 7, emphasis added). Castoriadis's anti-Leninism is too pronounced (in *PO I*, *RIB/RBI*, and elsewhere) for us to have to emphasize how little he would share Guillerm's conclusion.

Given the historical interest of the events of May 1968, as well as of the S. ou B. group, further investigation of the dissolution of the group is warranted. The historian Stephen Hastings-King will be conducting extensive interviews with former participants in the S. ou B. group. A book on the life and history of S. ou B. is expected.]

a) See *IG*, pp. 55–61 [T/E: *GI*, in *PSW 1*, pp. 32–36].

11
The Anticipated Revolution

May 1968 is already engraved in history. We will not, however, make it into an engraving. At the time these lines are being written, the crisis unleashed two months ago by a few *enragés* from Nanterre [University] is shaking French society from its roots to the summits of power. The meticulously refined mechanism of bureaucratic-capitalist institutions has become clogged. In order to maintain his power, the Head of State is forced to call upon his supporters to set up private groups. On all sides, from the bewildered brains of our brilliant leaders spout forth nothing but the emptiness that has always been within them. Millions of people

Written between May 20 and 25, 1968, the first part of this text (the untitled introduction, "Need for an Organized Revolutionary Movement," and "Proposals for the Immediate Constitution of a Revolutionary Movement") was roneotyped and distributed by former comrades of S. ou B. at the end of May. The entire text was published, along with texts by Edgar Morin and Claude Lefort, in *Mai 1968: La Brèche* (Paris: Fayard; printer's completion date marked as June 21, 1968). "La Revolution anticipée" was reprinted in *SF*, pp. 165–221. [T/E: A liberal translation of small parts of "La Révolution anticipée" appeared in "France, 1968," the concluding chapter of *Paris: May 1968*, written in large part, but not signed by, Maurice Brinton (London: Solidarity, June 1968; 2nd ed., London: Dark Star Press and Rebel Press, 1986). *La Brèche* was subsequently republished in 1988 by Editions Complexe with *Vingt Ans Après*, a series of retrospective articles by Morin ("Mais" [1978] and "Mai 68: complexité et ambiguïté" [1986]) and Lefort ("Relecture" [1988]), as well as Castoriadis's 1986 article, "Les Mouvements des années soixante," which also appeared in translation as "The Movements of the Sixties," *Thesis Eleven*, 18/19 (1987), pp. 20–31. In preparing the present English-language version of Castoriadis's essay from *La Brèche*, I have used the late Basil Druitt's unpublished translation, which was made available by Solidarity's Maurice Brinton. The typescript copy includes handwritten corrections by the author. For its publication in the present edition, substantial alterations have been made in this unfinished translation. Let me also note that, in response to a question I posed, Castoriadis informs me that, in translation, this text could just as well bear the title "The Revolution Anticipated" as its present title, "The Anticipated Revolution."]

struggle, thereby making it clear that the problem of how society is to be organized has been posed. Perhaps they will also see that they alone can resolve it. History, and people themselves, are engaged in a process of creation, and the meaning of what is happening remains wide open. It is not our intention to try to rigidify this process, or to speak about a present, more alive than ever, as though it were a dead past. To transform things, however, we have to understand them; to advance we have to orient ourselves.

The signification of the events of the last four weeks surpasses, in depth and in its certain repercussions, that of all previous struggles in France or elsewhere—not only because of those nine million workers on strike for twenty days, but above all because of what is qualitatively new in the content of the movement. In past revolutions—the Paris Commune, 1917, Catalonia 1936, Budapest 1956—one can find antecedents and seeds. For the first time in a modern bureaucratic-capitalist society, however, no longer is there just the radical demand, now there is the most radical revolutionary *affirmation* ablaze before everyone's eyes and spreading throughout the world. We must calmly let the following idea start to sink in: whatever the outcome, May '68 has opened a new period of universal history.

No longer in theory but in the acts themselves, not for a few days but for several weeks, not among the initiated few but among hundreds of thousands of people, ideas that bear fruit, acts that serve to organize, and the exemplary forms of modern revolution have gained popular currency and become a reality. This is happening in the most modern sectors of society, but the same process is also taking place where these ideas, acts, and forms might have appeared quite reckless and most difficult to achieve.

In a few days the revolutionary student movement has spread throughout the country. It has challenged the hierarchy and is beginning to pull it down where it seemed unassailable: in the field of knowledge and education. It has called for, and is beginning to bring about, the autonomous and democratic self-management of collectivities. It is challenging and considerably loosening the monopoly over information held by various centers of power. It is putting into question not the details but the very foundations and the substance of contemporary "civilization": consumer society, the partitioning of manual workers from intellectuals, the sacrosanct character of the University and of other holy places of bureaucratic-capitalist culture.

These are the necessary presuppositions for a revolutionary reconstruction of society. These are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a radical break with the bureaucratic-capitalist world. In contact with these touchstones, the revolutionary or reactionary nature of individuals, groups, and currents of opinion is continuously being revealed.

Just as much as in its aims, the revolutionary nature of the present movement is apparent in its modes of action, in its mode of being, and in their indissoluble unity.

From one day to the next, the immense creative potential of society, which bureaucratic capitalism had bound and gagged, explodes forth. The most audacious and the most realistic ideas (these are the same thing) are advanced, discussed, and applied. Language, which had been flattened and emptied by decades of dull dron-

ings emanating from the spheres of bureaucracy, advertising, and culture, shines forth fresh and resplendent. People reappropriate it in its fullness. Brilliant, effective, poetic slogans flash forth from the anonymous crowd. The educators are rapidly becoming educated; university professors and high-school teachers have not recovered from the surprise of realizing the intelligence of their pupils and the absurdity and uselessness of what they have been teaching them.

In a few days, twenty-year-old youths are gaining an understanding and a political wisdom that sincere revolutionaries have not yet achieved after thirty years as militant activists. In the March 22nd Movement,[1] in the UNEF,[2] and in SNE Sup,[3] leaders have appeared whose farsightedness and effectiveness yields nothing when compared to leaders of former times, and who, above all, are instaurating a new relationship with the masses. Renouncing neither their personalities nor their responsibilities, they are not "brilliant bosses," but rather the expression of the collectivity, and its leaven.

Sharing a trait characteristic of all revolutions, the movement is self-developing and self-fertilizing during its ascendent phase (May 3 to 24). It triggers the workers' strike walkouts. It transforms both the social relation of forces and the populace's image of institutions and personages. With a profound sense of tactics it obliges the State to reveal, step by step, its repressive, police-state nature. More than that, it renders visible an immense established disorder within the established order. It shows that the true substance of bureaucratic-capitalistic organization is total anarchy. It forces top university administrators and government ministers to reveal to everyone their incoherence, their incompetency, their professional imbecility. It pulls the mask from the "the only people competent to govern" by showing them to be the greatest incompetents of all.

On every institutional level—governmental, parliamentary, administrative, that of political parties—the movement reveals the prevailing emptiness. With bare hands the students are forcing the powers that be to display, behind their solemnities, their high-mindedness, their bluster, the *fear* that possesses them, a fear that has and can only have recourse to the truncheon and to the tear-gas grenade. At the same time, the movement impels the bureaucratic "working-class" leadership groups to reveal themselves as the ultimate guarantors of the established order, full partners in its incoherence and its anarchy. The movement has cut deep into the flesh of the French managerial strata, and the wound will not heal so soon.

The present movement is profoundly modern because it dissolves away the mystifying notion of a well-organized, well-oiled, good society, where only a few marginal problems remain and where radical conflict no longer exists. This violent upheaval took place not in the Congo, or in China, or in Greece, but in a country where contemporary bureaucratic capitalism is flourishing and well established, where highly educated administrators have been administering everything and very intelligent planners have foreseen everything. It is also modern, however, because it enables us to throw overboard a mass of ideological dross weighing down upon revolutionary activity. It was provoked not by the hunger to which capitalism supposedly condemns people or by some economic crisis that might somehow have influenced events. It had nothing to do with "underconsumption," or with "overproduction," or with the "falling rate of profit." Nor is it centered on economic demands; on the

contrary, it is only by going beyond the economic demands in which student syndicalism had become enmeshed for so long (with the blessing of "left-wing" parties) that it became itself. And inversely, it is in bottling up the movement of wage earners in strictly economic demands that the trade-union bureaucracies have tried and are trying to minimize the break of this fractured regime.

The present movement shows that the fundamental contradiction of bureaucratic-capitalist society is not the "anarchy of the market" or the antinomy between "the development of the forces of production and forms of property ownership" or between "collective production and private appropriation." The central conflict around which all the others are arrayed is shown to be that between directors and executants. The insurmountable contradiction that structures [*organise*] the tear running through this society manifests itself in bureaucratic capitalism's need to exclude people from the management of their own affairs, *and* in its inability to succeed in doing so (if it were to succeed, it would immediately collapse due to its very success). Its human and political expression is to be found in the bureaucrats' project of transforming people into objects (whether by violence, mystification, manipulation, teaching methods, or economic "carrots") and in people's refusal to let this happen.

One can clearly see in the present movement what all revolutions have shown—but that must be learned anew. There is no "glowing" revolutionary perspective, no "gradual growth of contradictions," and no "progressive accumulation of a mass revolutionary consciousness." There is the insurmountable contradiction and conflict of which we have just spoken, and there is the fact that society is periodically forced to produce those unavoidable "accidents" that obstruct it from functioning and that touch off peoples' struggles against the way it is organized.

The functioning of bureaucratic capitalism creates the *conditions* for an awakening of consciousness, conditions that are materially embodied in the very structure of alienating and oppressive society. When people are led to struggle, it is this social structure that they have to put into question, especially since bureaucratic anarcho-despotism constantly raises the question of how society is to be organized as an explicit problem in everyone's eyes.

Of course, the movement presents us with a characteristic antinomy: profoundly modern in its aims and in the strata animating it, it discovers its flammable materials in a sector of French capitalism that has remained antiquated, in a university whose structure has not changed for centuries. These structures, as such, are not typical. On the contrary. Anglo-Saxon universities have been "modernized," and this certainly has not immunized them against the outbreak of the same sort of conflicts. We have seen this in the events at Berkeley in the United States or at the LSE [London School of Economics] in London. What is typical is precisely the congenital and recurrent incapacity of bureaucratic-capitalist society to "modernize" itself without a profound crisis—as the problem of the French peasantry, the question of blacks in the United States, and even the issue of underdevelopment on a world scale all show on different levels. Through each of these crises is posed the question of the entire organization of society.

Finally, it is fundamental that the active core of the movement should have been the young—student youth in particular, but that of other social categories too.

Everyone knows it, and tears come even to the government's eyes when mentioning it. No existing institutions or organizations, however, be they Left or Right, can co-opt the meaning of this fact. Young people do not want to take their elders' place in an already-agreed-upon system. Youth vomits up this system, the future it proposes, and all its variants—even those that are "left-wing." Youth is not caught in a generational conflict, but in a social conflict of which it is one of the poles because of its refusal and rejection of the whole set of frameworks and values of the established disorder. We shall return to this point in the second part of our text.

All this—and probably many more things we do not have the time to say right now and even are incapable of seeing—will take months and years to elaborate and deepen in order to bring to light for everyone its meaning. For the moment, however, the urgency lies elsewhere.

Need for an Organized Revolutionary Movement

From the moment that the student movement led to a near-total general strike—nay, from the moment the majority of workers rejected the incredible swindle of the Grenelle Accords[4]—the crisis became objectively a total crisis of the regime and of society. At the same time, however, beyond the bottlenecks of institutional life and the emptiness of the political "leadership" groups, *the absolute political void* existing in the country became apparent.

We shall return to the analysis of this crisis and to the possible prospects it opens up. But here and now one thing is certain. The revolution must acquire a face. The revolution must make its voice heard. To aid in this endeavor a revolutionary movement of a new type is indispensable, and *now* possible. We say this independently of all "predictions"; whatever the outcome of events, the meaning and the necessity for such a movement are certain.

One can look back on the recent weeks and say that everything would have come off differently if there had existed a sufficiently powerful revolutionary movement capable, day after day, of foiling the bureaucracy's maneuvers, of exposing the duplicity of the "leadership" of the Left, of indicating to the workers the deep-seated meaning of the student struggles, of spreading the idea of forming autonomous strike committees first of all, then workers' councils, and finally of having these workers' councils start up production again. True, an enormous number of things on all levels should have been done and have not been done because such a movement did not exist. True, as the experience of the outbreak of the student struggles has demonstrated once again, such a movement could have played a capital role as catalyst, as enzyme, as lock-breaker. It could have done so without becoming, for all that, the bureaucratic "management" of the masses, remaining instead the instrument of their struggle and being, provisionally, their most lucid fraction. Such hindsight and such regrets, however, are futile. Not only is the physical nonexistence of such a movement not due to chance: had it existed, had it been formed in the foregoing period, it certainly would not have been the movement we are talking about. One can take the "best" of all the extant tiny groups, multiply its membership a thousandfold, and still have nothing capable of rising to the exigencies and the spirit of the present situation. This has been seen in the events: the existing extreme-left

groups did not know what to do, other than to replay interminably exactly the same prerecorded message, their substitute for any real guts. For the same reason, it would be pointless to try to repaste all these groups together. Whatever might have been their merits—for different reasons and to different degrees—as the conservators of the ashes of the revolution, which have been cold for decades, they have once again, in the test of events, shown themselves incapable of breaking out of their ideological and practical routine, unsuited as they are to learn as well as to forget anything.

The urgent task of the hour is the constitution of a new revolutionary movement out of these recent struggles, based upon their total experience. The formation of such a movement can only be accomplished through the regrouping of young students, workers, and others who have united in these struggles, on ideological and organizational bases that they themselves will have to define.

Revolutionary students have a primary responsibility in this effort to constitute a new revolutionary movement. The problems raised by the student movement, and the responses it has given, go far beyond the confines of the universities. They have a signification for the whole of society, and because of this, the revolutionary students must now assume their universal responsibilities.

If this is not done, it would mean the isolation and ultimate defeat of the student movement. It would mean the triumph of the line common to [Prime Minister Georges] Pompidou and [Communist trade-union leader Georges] Séguy:[5] that each person should stay in his place, that students should busy themselves with their own business and workers with theirs, thus leaving the government and political "leadership" groups free to take care of the business of society.

The movement of revolutionary students, however, cannot play a general role while remaining merely student oriented. This would amount to trying to act on other social sectors from the "outside," an attitude both false and sterile. The student movement has already acted "from the outside" on other social strata of the population by providing them with an example, by teaching them once more the meaning of struggle, by prompting a general strike. Under other forms, it can and should continue to play this role. If it remains, however, simply a student movement, it will not be able to give society what above all is missing at the present hour: a full and coherent voice that would burst apart the void of political blather today. It should neither transpose nor introduce from the outside what has made it so effective and fruitful on its own terrain: objectives that correspond to the deep-seated aims of those directly involved, action that springs from an organic collectivity.

The fact that the Nanterre movement has spilled over into the educational sphere as a whole has already required a change of terrain on which the struggle takes place, along with a transformation of the forms, objectives, and organizational structures of this struggle. The transition from the movement addressing student concerns to a movement dealing with overall issues will require a transformation qualitatively much greater, and much more difficult.

This difficulty—indicated by a thousand signs since May 13—pertains to a large number of organically linked factors.

The student movement has known success, it has become a reality and experienced joy on a terrain that is naturally its own: the universities and the surround-

ing areas. To say that it must pass to the level of true politics and face society in its entirety is apparently to take this ground out from under its feet, without offering it another comparable one right away.

It has tested its effectiveness. It has shown an admirable tactical sense, using methods of action that cannot at present be transposed, as such, onto the scale of society as a whole.

It has short-circuited the most difficult organizational problems because it acted in professionally and locally concentrated and unified collectivities. And now it is obliged to confront the heterogeneity and diversity of the society and the nation.

It is understandable that under these conditions many student revolutionaries refuse what seems to them the pure and simple abandonment of what, until now, has proved to be the only fertile ground.

It is for this reason that it has continually manifested tendencies toward a "flight in advance"—which in fact is only "flight sideways" and runs the risk of becoming a "flight backward." These tendencies arise from a false image of the situation. The explosive potentialities that a month ago existed in the student mass do not yet exist among the ranks of wage and salary earners. Seeking to perpetuate artificially the conditions of mid-May can only lead to completely unrealistic collective phantasms and spasmodic "double or nothing" wagers, which, far from serving as examples, will not teach anyone anything.

These difficulties, however, are connected to other, much more profound ones, because they refer us back to the decisive problems, to the ultimate question marks of revolutionary activity and of the revolution itself. By expressing these in their behavior, the revolutionary students give proof of a maturity that must be given the treatment it deserves: by speaking of it without reserve or circumspection.

The revolutionary students feel an antinomy between action and reflection: between spontaneity and organization, between truth of act and coherence of speech, between imagination and project. Their perception of this antinomy is what consciously or unconsciously lies behind their hesitations.

This perception is nourished by all previous experience. As others have seen happen over decades, they have seen reflection turn to sterile and sterilizing dogma in a few months or weeks; they have seen organization become bureaucracy and lifeless routine, speech transformed into the grinding out of mystified and mystifying words, projects degenerating into rigid and stereotyped programs. They have broken out of these yokes through their acts, their audacity, their refusal of theses and platforms, their spontaneous collectivization.

However, one cannot remain there. To accept this antinomy as valid, final, and insurmountable is to accept the very essence of bureaucratic-capitalist ideology. It is to accept the existing philosophy and reality. It is to reject a real attempt at transforming the world. It is to integrate the revolution into the established historical order. If the revolution is *only* an explosion lasting a few days or weeks, the established order (whether it knows it or not, whether it wants it or not) can quite easily accommodate itself to such an outbreak. Moreover, contrary to what it believes, the established order has a deep-seated need for these explosions. Historically, it is revolution that permits the world of reaction to survive as it transforms and adapts itself—and today we risk experiencing a fresh demonstration of this truth. These explosions

shatter the imaginary or unreal setting in which alienated society, by its very nature, tends to enclose itself—and they oblige alienated society to seek out new forms of oppression better adapted to today's conditions, even if it finds them through the elimination of yesterday's oppressors.

That society can revolt, live days and weeks of lucid intoxication and intense creation, has always been known. Old Michelet, writing about the French Revolution, said, "That day everything was possible . . . , the future was present. . . . [T]ime was no more, a glimmer of eternity." If, however, it is only a glimmer, the bureaucrats, with their dull lanterns, will immediately reappear as the only source of light. That society or one of its sections would be capable of rending momentarily the veils enveloping it and of leaping beyond its shadow, that is not the question. This is only the *posing* of the question; it is *for that* that the problem is *posed.* It is not a matter of living one night of love. It is a matter of living a whole life of love. If today we find ourselves faced with [Communist party General Secretary] Waldeck-Rochet[6] and Séguy, it is not because the Russian workers were unable to overthrow the Ancien Régime. It is, on the contrary, because they were capable of it—*and* because they were not able to instaurate, to institute their own power.

To leave oneself locked in this dilemma—between the moment of creative explosion, on the one hand, and the duration of time, which can only mean alienation, on the other—is to remain prisoner of the established order. Accepting the grounds on which this dilemma can be posed amounts to accepting the ultimate presuppositions of the ideology that has been dominant for millennia. It is to be the Saint Theresa of the Revolution, ready to pay for rare instants of grace with years of barrenness.

To accept that action excludes reflection is implicitly to admit that all reflection lacks a true object. As man cannot do without reflection, the field of reflection is given over to the makers of mystifications and to the ideologues of reaction.

To accept that spontaneity and organization are mutually exclusive is to give over the field of organization—without which no society can survive for a single day—to the bureaucrats.

To accept that reason and imagination are mutually exclusive is to have understood nothing about either one. When imagination surpasses dreams and delirium, and achieves lasting results, it is because it is constituting new universal forms. When rationality is creative reason, and not empty repetition, it is because it is nourished by imaginary sources for which no "scientific" pseudorationality can account.

Just as permanent "seriousness" is the height of the grotesque, so permanent feast is endless sadness. To accept the seriousness/festiveness antinomy as absolute is to accept the leisure civilization of our time. One breaks life into two portions, a "serious" part delivered over to organizers and a "free" part delivered over to salesmen of pleasure and entertainment [*spectacle*]—which may even include, at the limit, revolutionary "happenings."

If the socialist revolution has any meaning at all, it is certainly not to replace the bourgeoisie by "working-class" bureaucrats. Yet this is where it would surely end up if it refused to face up to these questions.

If the socialist revolution is to advance, it will not be by "making a synthesis"

of these antinomies, or by "overcoming" them. It will be by destroying the very ground from which they inevitably arise.

Will human society be able to effect this passage, not a passage toward a world without problems, but toward a world that will have left behind *these particular* problems? We do not know—and under this form the question has no interest today. The only thing that makes any sense is action in this direction—whether one thinks, as we do, that this passage is possible, or whether one thinks, as others might, that this action alone introduces into history the minimum of movement and truth it can tolerate. Beyond that, one is only a consumer or a "desperado." In a consumer society, however, "desperados" are soon transformed into consumer objects.

From early on, many revolutionary students have been worried by the danger that the movement will be "coopted" [récupération] by the old forces. However, the danger of cooptation of an explosion that remains simply an explosion is just as great, if not greater.

Someone who is afraid of cooptation has already been coopted. His attitude has been coopted—since it has been blocked up. The deepest reaches of his mind have been coopted, for there he seeks guarantees against being coopted, and thus he has already been caught in the trap of reactionary ideology: the search for an anticooptation talisman or fetishistic magic charm. There is *no* guarantee against cooptation; in a sense, everything can be coopted, and everything is one day or another. Pompidou quotes Apollinaire, Waldeck-Rochet calls himself a communist, there is a mausoleum for Lenin, people get rich selling Freud, May Day is a legal holiday. We should also point out, however, that the coopters coopt only corpses. For us, inasmuch as we are alive, Apollinaire's voice still speaks to us anew; ever and again the lines of the *Communist Manifesto* vibrate, giving us a glimpse into the chasm of history; ever and again the phrase [of Lenin] "Take back what has been taken from you" resounds in our ears; ever and again the [Freudian statement] "Where Id was, Ego shall become" reminds us of its unsurpassable exigency; ever and again the blood of the Chicago workers clouds and clears our vision. Everything can be coopted—save one thing: our own reflective, critical, autonomous activity.

To fight cooptation is to extend this activity beyond the here and now; it is to give it a form that will convey its content for all time and make it utterly impossible to coopt—that is, capable of being conquered again and again, in its ever-new truth, by living beings.

One does not avoid cooptation by refusing to define oneself. One does not avoid the arbitrary, but hastens toward it, by refusing to organize collectively. When someone in a gathering of two hundred people proposes a leaflet with dozens of slogans such as the suppression of chattel property and the nationalization of the family (or the other way around—it did not matter in the context) and is told in the end to print the leaflet in the name of the March 22nd Action Committee, is this the negation of bureaucracy or is it the arbitrary power of one person's (momentary) incoherence imposed upon a collectivity that will bear the consequences thereof?

(For those who prefer philosophical language: certainly, the movement must maintain and enlarge its openness as far as possible. Openness, however, is not and can never be absolute openness. Absolute openness is nothingness—that is to say, it is immediately absolute closure. Openness is that which constantly displaces and

transforms its own terms and even its own field, but can exist only if, at each instant, it leans on a provisional organization of the field. A question mark standing alone signifies nothing, not even a question. To signify a question it has to be preceded by a sentence, and it has to posit that certain of its terms possess a meaning that, for the moment, is not in question. An interrogative statement puts in question certain significations while affirming others—only to come back to these later on.)

The revolutionary students have had the experience of the traditional groupuscules, which are, at bottom, prisoners of the most deep-seated practical and ideological structures of bureaucratic capitalism; rigid, predetermined programs fixed once and for all; repetitious speeches no matter what is really going on; organizational forms copied from the social relations extant in established society. These groups reproduce within themselves the division between directors [*dirigeants*] and executants, the scission between those who "know" and those who "do not know," the separation between a scholastic pseudotheory and life. This is the division, the scission they wish to establish in relation to the working class, of which they all aspire to become the "leaders" [*dirigeants*].

One does not exit from this universe, however, but on the contrary encloses oneself within it when one thinks it suffices simply to take the contrary of each of these terms, the negation of each of them, in order to find the truth. One cannot overcome bureaucratic organization by refusing all organization, nor the sterile rigidity of platforms and programs by refusing all definition of objectives and means, nor the sclerosis of dead dogmas by condemning true theoretical reflection.

True, this way out is difficult, the path very narrow. The specificity of a crisis as deep as the one through which France is passing at this moment is that everyone walks on a razor's edge, revolutionaries most of all. For the government, for the bosses, for the bureaucratic managers, what is at stake are their positions, their money, and, if things get out of hand, their heads—that is to say, practically nothing. For us, the danger is greatest, for what is at stake is our very being as revolutionaries. What we risk now is much more than our skin; it is the deepest meaning [*signification*] of what we are fighting for and of what we are, which depends on the possibility of our making something other than a momentary explosion out of what has happened, of our constituting it without taking away its life, of our giving it a face that can move about and look at what is going on; in short, it depends on the possibility of our destroying the dilemmas and antinomies already described, and the ground from which they arise.

Recent experience already shows us the way.

Should a revolutionary minority "intervene" or not? By what means, and up to what point? If, first, a few *enragés* from Nanterre, and then the March 22nd Movement, and finally a good number of revolutionary students had not "intervened," it is obvious nothing of what has happened would have taken place, as it is obvious that these interventions would not have had an effect if a large portion of the student body had not been virtually ready to act. In intervening, a minority that assumes its responsibilities acts with the most extreme audacity but also senses up to what point the mass is willing and able to go; it thus becomes a catalyzing agent and a source of revelation that leaves behind it the dilemma about voluntarism versus spontaneity.

Similarly: Are the demands put forward concerning the universities "minimum" or "maximum," "reformist" or "revolutionary"? In a sense, they may seem "revolutionary" according to the terms of traditional language, since they could not be achieved without an overthrow of the social system (you cannot build "socialism in one university"). In other people's eyes, they appear "reformist" precisely because they seem to concern the university alone, and because one can easily conceive their being realized in a watered-down, coopted form, the better to keep present-day society functioning (which leads some people to denounce them or to lack interest in them). In this case, however, it is this very distinction that is false. The positive and underlying meaning of these demands lies elsewhere: being partially applicable within the framework of the existing system of rule, they make it possible to put the system constantly into question. Applying them will immediately raise new problems: their application will daily present to the horrified eyes of a hierarchical society the scandal of undergraduates discussing together with eminent scientists the content and the methods of education; it will help to mold people whose conception of the social world, of authority relations, of the management of collective activities will, if only in part, have been transformed.

The problems raised by the question of how to constitute a revolutionary movement must be tackled in the spirit that emerges from these examples.

Proposals for the Immediate Constitution of a Revolutionary Movement

The movement cannot exist unless it defines itself. And it cannot continue unless it refuses to let itself become solidified into a definition given once and for all.

Obviously, the movement must define itself and develop its own structure. If, as one ought to think, it is called upon to expand and to develop, its ideas, its forms of action, and its organizational structures will undergo a constant transformation. This transformation will take place as a function of its experience and of its work, as well as of the contributions of those who will come to join the movement. It is not a matter of setting in stone, once and for all, its "program," its "statutes," and its "roster of activities," but of *commencing* what should remain a permanent effort at self-definition and self-organization.

Principles

The movement should be inspired by the following ideas, which are valid for the socialist reconstruction of society, as well as for the movement's own internal functioning and for the conduct of its activities.

Under the conditions of the modern world, the suppression of the ruling and exploiting classes requires not only the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, but also the elimination of the division between directors and executants as distinct social strata. Consequently, the movement combats this division wherever it is to be found, and does not accept it within its own ranks. For the same reason, it fights hierarchy in all its forms.

What is to replace the social division between directors and executants and the

bureaucratic hierarchy in which it is embodied is self-management [*autogestion*], namely, the autonomous and democratic management of various activities by the collective action of those who carry them out. Self-management requires the actual exercise of power by collective bodies of those directly concerned in their own area, that is, the widest possible direct democracy; the election and permanent revocability of each delegate with any particular responsibility; the coordination of activities by committees of delegates also elected and liable to recall at any time.

The actual exercise of self-management implies and requires the permanent circulation of information and ideas. It also requires the elimination of partitions between social categories. It is, lastly, impossible without the plurality and diversity of opinions and tendencies.

Organizational Structures

The organizational structures of the movement stem directly from these principles:

constitution of grass-roots groups of a size that allows both an effective division of tasks and fruitful political discussion;

coordination of the general activities of the grass-roots groups through coordinating committees made up of elected and revocable delegates;

coordination of activities dealing with specific tasks through corresponding commissions, also made up of elected and revocable delegates;

technical executive commissions under the political control of the coordinating committees;

deliberative general assemblies bringing together all the grass-roots groups, as frequently as conditions permit it.

Internal functioning

Two ideas essential from the outset:

The task of the general organs (coordinating committees, specialized commissions) above all should be to collect information and recirculate it within the movement; that of the grass-roots groups above all should be to make the decisions. It is of the essence to invert the usual bureaucratic-capitalist schema (where information can travel only upward and decisions can come only downward).

A permanent task of the movement will be to organize and facilitate the active participation of all in the elaboration of its policies and its ideas and in the making of decisions in full knowledge of the relevant facts. If this is not done, a division between "politicos" and "executants" will rapidly reappear. To fight against this division is not a matter of initiating a "political literacy" campaign on the bourgeois model, as is usually done in the traditional organizations, but rather of aiding militants to reflect critically, starting from their own experience, using methods of active political self-education.

Forms of Action

These can only be defined as events occur, and on actual terrains. The general direction in which they should tend, however, should be to aid laboring people to struggle for the above-mentioned objectives and to organize along analogous lines.

Nonetheless, a certain number of *immediate tasks* should be defined and carried out at once. They are, in logical and temporal order:

1. *To organize* along these lines, or at least along lines that allow the movement to decide collectively on its organization and its orientation.
2. To produce *a journal* as rapidly as possible. A journal is not only immensely important from the informational, propagandistic, and agitational points of view; its importance also lies above all in the following:

   The journal can and should be a *collective* means of *organizing* people. At the present stage, it is the only way to answer the demand of those comrades in various places and circles who would like to organize with the movement. Simply by reproducing the movement's guiding principles and organizing principles and by describing its activities, the journal will make it possible for people to respond to the question What is to be done? as they organize themselves and make contact with the movement, without the movement needing to "organize them," a task that would be both difficult and questionable.

   The journal can be an essential tool for overcoming the possible division *within* the movement between "politicos" and "ordinary militants," as well as *between* the movement itself and the outside world. This can be done while remaining open to all by (a) organizing the active participation of grass-roots groups in the preparation of the paper (the grass-roots groups each being responsible for a definite column or section of the paper); (b) making its columns widely available to its readership, encouraging their participation (not only through the publication of contributions and letters, but through the systematic organization of recorded interviews, etc.).

3. To explain everywhere and by all available means (meetings, journal, leaflets, and later pamphlets, etc.) the profound and universal meaning of the students' action and of its objectives:

   The signification of the demand for *collective management*; of the struggle *against the division between directors and executants and against hierarchy*; of the explosion of *creative activity* among the young; of their *self-organization*. All the themes of the socialist revolution can and should be developed in a vital way, in light of the experiences of May '68, beginning with these points;

   The signification of the struggle *against bureaucratic-capitalist culture,* which should become an attack against the foundations of modern "civilization": against the separation of productive work from leisure; against the absurdity of consumer society; against the monstrosity of contemporary cities; against the effects of the absolute scission between manual labor and intellectual work, and

so forth. All this is simmering within the population but, outside of "intellectual" circles, it has not reached the point of articulation and expression.

4. To participate in, and to push as far as possible, the demolition of the bourgeois University, and to transform it, as far as this can be done, into a center for contesting the established disorder. One must settle down without illusions and without hesitation to this task of capital importance. Self-management of the University has an exemplary character. What will remain of it in the long term matters little if the movement ebbs; and if the movement resumes, it will again be a basis for starting things up. The self-management of the University can and should become an unhealable wound on the flanks of the bureaucratic system, a permanent catalyst in the eyes of laboring people.
5. To drive into a corner the bureaucratic and political apparatuses, which already have been shaken by demands for self-management. Whenever someone puts himself forward as a "leader" or a "representative," he must be asked the question, "From where and from whom do you derive your power? How did you obtain it? How do you exercise it?" At this important juncture, laboring people should be encouraged to join the CFDT[7] (without leaving any illusions about trade unions as such) because it is less bureaucratized, and more permeable at its base to the movement's ideas. Also and above all, they must join it in order to raise the following question and demand: Self-management is good not just for the outside world; is it not just as good, within the trade-union branch, for the local union, for the national union federation, and for the confederation of national unions?

The Stages of the Crisis

It is certainly not our intention to write the history of the struggles of the past few weeks. However, certain elements of their overall signification, which seem to be not generally recognized and whose import surpasses the immediate situation, must be laid out.

The crisis went through four clearly distinct phases:

1. *From May 3 to 14.* The student movement, until then limited to Nanterre, suddenly broadened its scope, drew in the whole country, and, after the street battles during the night of May 11 and the demonstration on the thirteenth, culminated in the general occupation of the universities.
2. *From May 15 to 27.* Beginning at Sud-Aviation (Nantes), spontaneous strikes including factory occupations broke out and spread rapidly. It was only on the afternoon of the seventeenth, after the spontaneous work stoppages at the Renault-Billancourt automobile factory, that the trade-union leaders jumped on the bandwagon and managed to take control of the movement, finally concluding the Grenelle Accords with the government.
3. *From May 28 to 30.* After the workers' brutal rejection of the Grenelle Accords swindle, the trade-union leaders and the "left-wing" parties tried to shift prob-

lems onto the level of "political" wheeling and dealing. Meanwhile, the decomposition of the governmental and state apparatus was reaching its peak.

4. *Starting May 31.* The ruling strata pulled themselves together, de Gaulle dissolved the Assembly and threatened the strikers. Communists, Socialists, and Gaullists agreed to play the electoral farce. Meanwhile, the trade-union leaders reneged on their general "prerequisite conditions" for any negotiations, and tried to conclude agreements as fast as possible sector by sector. The police took on the task of reoccupying workplaces, beginning with the public-service sector.

The *first stage* of the crisis is dominated exclusively by the student movement. Let us not reiterate the signification of this fact but instead indicate the reasons for the student movement's extraordinary effectiveness.

The reasons for the student movement's extraordinary effectiveness can be found first of all in the radical content of its political objectives. Whereas for years the official student unions and the "left-wing" parties had been begging for nickels and dimes (student grants, meeting places, etc.), the Nanterre students, later followed by the students of the whole country, raised [two relevant] questions: "Who is Master in the University?" and "What is the University?" They answered: "We want to be its masters and to make something different of it than what it presently is." Whereas for years people had been moaning that the percentage of sons of workers in the University was very small—as though, in countries where the percentage is higher, the University and society had changed their character!—they opened the University to the laboring population. Whereas for years people had been asking for more professors [*maîtres*], they now began to question the very relationship between teachers and students. They thus attacked the bureaucratic-hierarchical structures of society right where they seemed most strongly based on common sense, right where the sophism that knowledge endows one with a right to power (and that power, by definition, possesses knowledge) seemed unassailable. If, however, first-year students can have, upon deliberation, a vote and as much say in their curricula and teaching methods as world-renowned professors, on what grounds dare one deny workers in a business enterprise the right to manage their work, which they know better than anyone else, or the members of a trade union the direction of struggles that concern and involve only them? (This, much more than the presence of anti-Stalinist militants in the student movement, explains the bitterness and the hatred the Communist party and the CGT[8] have exhibited toward the movement from its inception; they immediately sensed it as a challenge to their own bureaucratic nature.) For years a "modernization" (in the bureaucratic-capitalist sense) of their curricula had been timidly suggested; the students have attacked the substance and the content of a university education, and by their acts they have denounced the myth (resurrected a few years ago by a strange set of "Marxists") of a neutral science that should have nothing to do with ideology.

At the same time, this radical content appeared not in words but in deeds, through effective methods of struggle. Cutting short all the "traditionally approved" methods—useless talk, negotiations, pressure tactics, coming and goings in and out of the trade unions, as well as illusory "takeovers" of the latter—the students passed to direct action, knowing how to choose the most favorable terrain in each instance.

Finally, the nonbureaucratic, nontraditional nature of the movement's organization played a key role: collective decisions made on the spot with everyone participating in their execution, the lifting of prohibitions and the elimination of political suspicions, and leaders emerging as action takes place.

It must also be said here, however, that the effectiveness of the movement, on the three levels described, was also linked to the *concrete conditions* from which it sprang and within which it maintained its effectiveness up to the occupation of the universities. Now, its weakness in the succeeding stages was due to its attempt to transpose, practically en bloc, the objectives, the forms of action and of organization that had been so successful on their first terrain, onto the level of society in general and of the totality of its problems. This attempt could only fail, and it led the movement to the very brink of isolation and an acceleration of its tendency merely to revolve around itself.

We do not mean that these ideas are valid only on the university level (or only within an organic setting of some kind); rather, that they cannot be mechanically transposed elsewhere without their signification being totally inverted. To transpose them in a fruitful way requires reflection. Otherwise, it is just repetition—the bureaucracy of thought to which the refusal to think inevitably leads. Attempts at mechanical transposition were made possible and continue to be nourished today by a false image of social reality, by a lack of understanding of modern capitalism, in which the mythology of "workerism" plays a preponderant role. The student movement has acted almost all the time as though the working class were just one great revolutionary powder keg and as though the sole problem consisted merely in finding a good spot to place the fuse.

The *second stage* of the movement should have shown to everyone, beginning Monday, May 20, that this was not so. Of course, the student battles, the occupation of university buildings, and the breakdown of the government induced the spontaneous strike movements at Sud-Aviation in Nantes (May 15), as well as at the Renault works in the provinces and even at Billancourt. Because of this, the trade-union leadership groups, and notably the CGT, had to do a 180-degree about-face in the space of a few days, and change from open hostility toward the student movement and from tagging along behind the strike movement to "supporting" the first and hemming in the second. They thus succeeded in winning total control over the strike movement until the conclusion of the Grenelle Accords. It would be desperately naive, however, to see this control as a mere result of the attitude of the trade-union leadership groups—as though the workers did not exist. What must be understood first and foremost is that once the strikes were touched off, the attitude of the trade-union leadership groups was in no respect questioned by the workers at the grass roots. At no time, in no place, did one see even the remotest similarity to the radical challenge to established relations that took place even in the traditionally archconservative sectors of the University (Law, Medicine, Political Science, etc.). Nor was there any questioning of the relations of production within capitalist business enterprises, of the alienation one experiences in one's work whatever one's salary level, of the division between directors and executants established between trained staff [*cadres*] and working people, or between leaders and the grass roots of "working-class" organizations.

It is of capital importance to point out firmly and calmly that in France, in May 1968, the industrial proletariat was not the revolutionary vanguard of this society; it was the lumbering rear guard. If the student movement actually mounted an assault on the heavens, what held society down to the ground on this occasion was the attitude of the proletariat, its passivity toward its own and the regime's leaders, its inertia, its feelings of indifference toward everything that does not directly concern economic demands. If the clock of history were to freeze in May 1968, one would have to say that the most conservative and the most mystified sector of society, the one most ensnared and entrapped in the webs of modern bureaucratic capitalism, was the working class, and more especially the section of the working class that follows the Communist party and the CGT. Its sole aim was to improve its situation *within* consumer society. It did not imagine that even this improvement might be achieved through autonomous action. The workers went on strike, but they left to the traditional organizations the direction of the strike, the definition of its objectives, and the choice of its methods of action. Quite naturally, such methods became methods of inaction. When the history of the May events is written, it will be found that a sector of workers, in some company or other, in some province or other, did attempt to go further. The overwhelming sociological picture [*image*], however, is certain and clear; the workers were not even physically present. Two or three days after the beginning of the strikes, the occupation of factories—whose meaning rapidly changed, the trade-union bureaucracies turning this occupation into a way of sealing off the workers, thus preventing them from being contaminated by the students—essentially, and in the great majority of instances, became occupation by CP/CGT functionaries [*cadres*] and militants.

This picture is not altered by the fact—a very important one for the future—that thousands of young workers, acting as individuals, joined the students and exhibited a different attitude. Nor is it altered by the fact that the workers rejected en masse the Grenelle Accords. These agreements were a swindle pure and simple *on the economic level*. No matter how mystified the workers may have become, they still know how to add and subtract. The picture is confirmed, on the other hand, by the fact that from May 31 onward, when the police first attempted to reoccupy the factories, only rarely did they meet with resistance of any kind.

As revolutionaries, it is not for us to pass moral judgments on the attitude of the working class, still less to write it off as a loss once and for all. What we must do, however, is to understand. We must strongly condemn the workerist mythology that has exerted and continues to exert a disastrous influence within the student movement (and in left-wing groupuscules, though there it matters little). It is indispensable to maintain and to deepen the contacts established with the workers, to broaden them as far as possible, and to try to show to the whole of the working class the profound signification of the student movement. Likewise, it was and it remains catastrophically wrong-headed to believe that, in the immediate future, one only has to rock the boat a little bit harder to swing the proletariat over to the side of the revolution.

We have to understand what lies at the bottom of the proletariat's attitude: an adherence to modern capitalist society, privatization, the refusal to envisage taking charge of collective matters, and the race toward ever-higher levels of consumption

are the key factors. Acceptance of the hierarchy—be it at work or in the union and in politics—passivity and inertia, and the limitation of demands to economic issues correspond to these factors as the negative to the positive. To understand this we must understand what modern capitalism is, and go beyond a moribund traditional Marxism, which continues to dominate the minds of many living beings.

We must also go beyond the traditional conceptions, desperately superficial as they are, concerning the nature of the "working-class" bureaucracy and the basis for its hold over the workers. Not only is it not a question of "errors" or of "betrayal" on the part of "working-class" bureaucrats, or of their making "mistakes" (except in the technical sense in which, like a state apparatus, they can make a false move, one against their own interests), or of their "betraying" anyone, since they play the part that is theirs within the system, but it is equally false to ascribe the working class's attitude to their hold over it. Of course, decades of Stalinist mystification and terror, as well as the mystifications, maneuvers, and methods of intimidation still practiced today by these apparatuses contribute to the formation of this attitude. Nevertheless, if the workers had shown a tenth of the autonomous activity displayed by the students, the bureaucratic apparatuses would have been shattered to pieces. This the apparatuses know and it is in this light that we can understand their attitude throughout the May events. Their intense *fear* was visible through their maneuverings, lies, false accusations, contradictions, daily changes of opinion, and perpetual acrobatics, and it has ruled and still rules their actions; it is this fear that explains their haste to conclude the Grenelle Accords with the government, and then to shift the problems onto the false electoral terrain as soon as was possible.

At the same time—and here light is shed on the workers' attitude as well as on the present situation of the bureaucratic apparatus—the hold of these "leadership" groups over the grass roots has grown as weak as is possible. Throughout the crisis the managerial bureaucratic apparatus, and that of the CP and the CGT in particular, has shown itself to be a rigid carcass surviving its own death. Its relationship with its supporters has become almost purely electoral. Up to and including Friday, May 24, the CP/CGT demonstrations in Paris gathered fifty to sixty thousand people at most, that being a *tenth* of the Communist electorate in the Paris region. One Communist voter in ten bothered himself to go demonstrate "peacefully" when the country was in the throes of a general strike and when the question of who should hold power was objectively being posed. There is hardly any room for nuancing this analysis in the light of the far bigger May 29 demonstration that attracted people from all over Paris, but who were quite happy simply to chant over and over again the CP's slogans at the time when the disorder and the decomposition of the regime had reached their height. What are the CP and CGT at present? An apparatus full of functionaries from political and labor-union "organizations" and from capitalist institutions (deputies to the National Assembly, mayors, city councillors, full-time politicians and trade unionists, the staff of the Party's and the CGT's newspapers, employees of Communist municipalities, etc.), followed by a large political and trade-union electorate, which is as passive as it is inert. The type of relationship it maintains with this electorate is of the same kind as the one de Gaulle entertains with his: both vote for their respective leaders in order to be "left in peace." Be it

politics or economic demands, they vote so that they no longer have to busy themselves with their own business.

What still separates the CP/CGT bureaucratic apparatus from the traditional social-democratic one is first of all its methods. Instead of saccharine reformist hypocrisy—and in spite of the attempts of people like [Roger] Garaudy,[9] who would like to see it adopt such a policy—it continues to hurl slanders, brandish police provocation (the CGT endorsed Pompidou's statements about "foreign agitators"; a CGT strike picket in Lyon on the evening of May 24 turned over to the police a group of students coming from Nanterre) and physical attacks (CGT strike picketers at Billancourt prevented CFDT union representatives from entering the factory; cf. also the statements made by [CFDT General Secretary Eugène] Descamps in *Le Monde* concerning "a return to the period of 1944–46").[10]

This continuation of the Stalinist totalitarian style is consonant with other deep-seated characteristics of the present state of the French Communist party. Prisoner of its past, the Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus, in France like almost everywhere else, is incapable of bringing about the turnaround that, in theory, would permit it to play a new role. Certainly not a revolutionary role, but the role of the huge modern reformist bureaucracy of which French capitalism has need in order to function, and which benevolent advisers, knowing sociologists, and crafty technicians have been proposing for years. Blocked on its own evolutionary path by its historical origins and by its constant reference to the Russian model, which for it remains indispensable—though both are becoming heavier and heavier crosses to bear—at the same time it is blocking the "normal" operation of French capitalism. In order to preserve its cohesion and its specificity, it has to maintain the "seizure of power" as its ultimate goal—for those at the summits of the apparatus, the hope to accede to the position of ruling stratum of society; for those at the base, a vague notion of a "passage to socialism" that supports them in their faith, makes them swallow anything and everything, and provides them with a good conscience. At the same time, however, they know perfectly well that this goal is not realizable outside the context of a world war. "Revolutionary" *and* "reformist" in words, it is in reality *neither* the one *nor* the other, and only with difficulty does it manage to hide the contradiction in which it is floundering, under its pitiful "theory" of the multiple paths to socialism. Incapable for these reasons of blending in with the thrice-over illusionary reformism of the SFIO[11]—which its own existence as a matter of fact makes that much more illusory—it remains unacceptable to the SFIO, which fears being swallowed up by it, and it cannot even make a lasting alliance with these reformists. Result of the many archaic aspects of French life, and in its turn the cause of their perpetuation, unbelievably monstrous relic of a Russian past in a French present, it will probably fall only at the same time and by the same hands as French capitalism.

Today's events, however, are putting it to a difficult test. First of all, something has happened to it for the first time in history, something it has always done everything—including assasination—to avoid: it has been overtaken on its left by large-scale movements—the students, on the one hand, and even the CFDT with the self-management issue, on the other. Next, it has found itself cruelly caught between the acuteness of the social and political crisis, which has objectively raised the question of power, and its own inability to put forward any political aim *whatsoever*. As

we have already indicated, the present French CP is neither willing nor able to assume power; it knows that it would be accepted in a "Popular Front" government only on the condition that it pay for the costs of the operation (i.e., that it take responsibility for the high costs this government would incur, without having any access to the ministries that would permit it to infiltrate the state apparatus). It knows, too, that the only other conceivable way of assuming power would be through a civil war that would rapidly degenerate into a third world war, an option Moscow absolutely vetoes. The only thing left for the CP to do is to go on maneuvering, pretending it wants a "popular government." What it fears most is that such a government would actually be formed. And in case of an electoral victory, it is praying (and this has every chance of happening) that the [Socialist] Federation[12] will betray it to form a "center-left" government. The CP's line is reduced to this: lose as few feathers as possible, or maybe even gain a few. And it is indeed likely that as a result of the general reawakening of political consciousness prompted by recent events, the CP will make up its losses among young workers, students, and intellectuals by gaining a clientele among a hitherto apolitical or petit-bourgeois segment of the population. However, this situation renders the French CP's Stalinist apparatus at once harder and more brittle than before. Above all, it henceforth puts this apparatus on the defensive.

This situation explains the CP's haste to put everything back in order, as it also explains the CGT's role in the unbelievable swindle of the Grenelle Accords. Never before had the eagerness of the trade-union bureaucracies to sell out the mass movement for a spoonful of rotten pottage reached such extremes. [CGT leader] Benoît Frachon[13] boasted on the radio of the fact that there were three times as many strikers as in June 1936. Well, in '36 the strikers immediately obtained the forty-hour week and two weeks paid vacation, considerable trade-union rights, and a substantial increase in real wages—all of this being, Alfred Sauvy[14] has calculated, the equivalent of a 35 to 40 percent increase in real pay. No lies, no sophistries from Séguy will eliminate the fact that in May 1968 he stood in front of the workers and asked them to accept what was nothing more than a set of sheer negotiation promises and—except for the increase in the guaranteed minimum wage, which applies only to about 7 percent of salaried workers, agricultural workers included—an in fact negative wage "increase." The 10 percent they were granted is really only 7.75 percent (since the 7 percent increase applies to three-quarters of the year, the 10 percent increase being applicable only to the last quarter). Now, each year, and without strikes, wage rates in France go up by an average of 6 percent, according to official figures—and actual increases (including bonuses, the hierarchical "bracket creep," etc.) reach 7 percent. Would people really have gone on a general strike a fortnight just to gain 1 or 2 percent more? Not even this, for the unpaid strike days push this margin onto the negative side (two weeks of unpaid work bring annual wages down by 4 percent), not to mention all that the State has taken from wage earners during the last nine months, first with the new Social Security rules (the increased contributions and the lower reimbursements are officially estimated to be approximately 1 percent of total wages) and then with the extension of the value added tax to retail commerce (which caused in January a 1-percent-above-"normal" rise in prices), not to mention the price hike the bosses will "pass along" to working people under the

pretext of this imaginary increase in wages, not to mention, above all, the "need" for "productivity" increases, namely, work speedups, for which the bosses are already clamoring and about which Séguy has not breathed a word from the inception of the strike to its conclusion.

To appreciate correctly the objective situation, the irrationality, the incoherency, and the fear of capitalist *and* trade-union "leaders," as well as the absurdity of the traditional analyses, we must insist upon the following point: in economic terms, French capitalism *could* and *can* grant a real increase in the actual buying power of wage earners of between 5 and 10 percent *beyond* the rate it would in any case have granted in 1968. Not only can it: it ought to, since on the whole such an increase would do it nothing but good (marginal businesses excluded). For years French industry has been working below its physical and human potential, to the extent that it could easily produce 5 or 10 percent more, with no greater cost than that of additional raw materials (a small proportion of a product's ultimate value). This applies even more for those branches that would be the first to benefit from an increase in wages: consumer industries (textiles, household electrical appliances, automobiles, foodstuffs) and the building trades. These branches have for years had a higher-than-average percentage of unused capacities. Taking into account, once again, the normal, steady increases in annual wages, there existed, therefore, an objective basis for a compromise on a nominal wage increase of around 15 percent, everything included. *No redistribution of national income* would be involved: ideally, with a "good" reformist bureaucracy—one that would not, unlike the CGT, be above all *fearful*—the proletariat could have obtained such an increase; and as things stand, it probably would have been satisfied. It is not for economic reasons that this was not done: it was because the various factions of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy found it impossible to reach the point where, each faction for itself and all together, they could conduct themselves "rationally" from the point of view of their own interests.

The workers' massive rejection of the Grenelle Accords—which, as a matter of fact, will force French capitalism to behave less irrationally, by granting some real increases—has opened the *third stage* of the crisis. During its brief existence, this stage has revealed the absolute political emptiness of French society, and it has created an original historical phenomenon: a duality of nonpower. On the one hand, we have the government and the party in power in utter decomposition, hanging upon the gasping breaths of a seventy-eight-year-old man without even believing much any longer in what he manages to utter. On the other hand, we have the intrigues and maneuvers of the "left-wing" Sganarelles,[15] incapable even under these circumstances of proposing anything other than schemes for the formation of new governments and unable even to present themselves as "united." The condition for this void: the total political inertia of the workers and salaried employees, who carried on the greatest strike ever recorded in the history of any country as a simple strike over economic demands; who refuse to see that a strike of this magnitude raises the question of power, of the organization, and even of the survival of society; who also do not see that the strike can continue only by becoming a "*strike for managerial power [grève gestionnaire]*"; and who confine themselves to feeble support for the vague slogan of "popular government," which means placing matters back into the hands of the bureaucrats of "the Left."

For them, as for their governmental "adversaries," there is only one concern: that things return to a state of "normalcy" as soon as possible. With his May 31 speech, which opens the *fourth stage* of the crisis, the General once again offered them the way out. Behind his menacing rhetoric he promised to let them play once again their favorite game: electioneering. This explains the relief on the "Left" (so well described by *Le Monde*'s correspondent) after de Gaulle's speech. Little matter that he then took advantage of the situation to correct his referendum blunder[16] (51 percent "no" in the referendum makes 51 percent "no"; given the electoral gerrymandering, 51 percent of the vote for the opposition in the elections would still provide a majority for the [Gaullists of the] UNR[17] and their allies among the independents, not to mention the possibility of enlarging to the center and even to the "Left" the range of Pompidou's parliamentary support). There is total complicity—from Pompidou to Waldeck-Rochet, taking in Mitterrand[18] and Mollet[19] on the way—to transfer all problems onto the false terrain upon which these problems can, as they well know, neither be solved nor even posed: the parliamentary arena.

Immediately follows the stampede in retreat of the "tried and true leaders of the working class." Without batting an eye, the "great tranquil force" that, according to Séguy, is the CGT allows the police to reoccupy workplaces one after another. The national trade-union federations withdraw their "precondition" that the ordonnances[20] be repealed because, as Séguy explains with a straight face during his May 31 broadcast, Pompidou told him that the affair came under the jurisdiction of the National Assembly and could no longer be discussed, as the Assembly had been dissolved, but that the next Assembly would surely discuss it. . . . Eugène Descamps himself will make sure that the candidates pronounce themselves on this issue (but where the devil was he in 1956 when the Republican Front,[21] which had come to power with a formal promise to end the Algerian War, instead intensified it?).

Suddenly, petit-bourgeois, nationalist, and reactionary France—whose existence some had forgotten in the previous weeks—breathed easier, seized hold of itself, and reappeared on the Champs Elysées.[22]

The Future

One must not delude oneself about the coming weeks. They will be dominated by the ending of the strikes, the comedy of elections and of the new parliament, and even the summer holidays. And there is still the risk, amid this ebbing of protest, that the government will clamp down on the student movement and even reoccupy the universities. The student movement can guard against this risk only by organizing itself as quickly and as fully as possible, by effectively self-managing the universities, and by explaining to the population what it is doing.

Still less should one underestimate the immense possibilities the historical period now opening up will offer. The "tranquility" and the brutalization of modern capitalist society in France—and perhaps elsewhere—have been shattered for a long time to come. The "credit" of Gaullism is at an all-time low, and even if it survives for a while, its imaginary talisman is broken. The bureaucratic leadership groups that are used to enroll workers into the system have been profoundly shaken, and henceforth a deep crack separates them from the young workers. "Left-wing" politicians

have, and will have, nothing to say about the problems that have been raised. The simultaneously repressive and absurd character of the state apparatus and of the social system have been revealed on a massive scale. No one will forget it very soon. At every level, the "authorities" and "values" have been denounced, torn to pieces, and annihilated. Many years will pass before this enormous gaping breach in the edifice of bureaucratic capitalism will truly be filled back in—assuming it ever could be.

At the same time, fundamental ideas that were yesterday's objects of ignorance or scorn are now known and discussed everywhere. By thousands and tens of thousands, new militants, who have broken radically with bureaucracy of all stripes, have been formed. Despite the limitations of its attitude in the course of events, the working class has been through a tremendous experience. It has relearned the meaning and the effectiveness of struggle. And it will be less and less content in the future with a few crumbs. Many incendiary hotbeds for further explosions will remain, in the universities certainly, among young workers too, and perhaps in factories and business firms where the idea of self-management will begin to make headway.

French society is faced with a long phase of disturbances, unrest, and upheavals. It is up to revolutionaries to assume their permanent and ongoing responsibilities.

The Originality of the May '68 Crisis

There is a risk that the crisis of May '68 will be measured by the yardstick of the past, reduced to significations and categories ready to hand, judged by excess and by default, by comparison with previously acquired experience—a risk already borne out, despite the claims of various commentaries. The protagonists themselves are not always the last to misapprehend the meaning of what they have wrought, and this should not surprise us. People rarely understand at the time that they are in the process of creating new frames of reference. Most often, the real signification of their creation becomes visible only when it has entered the imaginary solidity of the past; and the very fact of its lessened reality makes it then decisive [*déterminante*] for the future.

There is no need to dwell on the false comparisons of the French events to the Cultural pseudo-Revolution going on in China. Despite the intricate complexity of the situations, forces, and problems involved, this much is clear: the Maoist faction has launched a vast operation to reassert control over the bureaucratic apparatus, and they have not hesitated to appeal to the population against the opposing side. It goes without saying that a mobilization of this kind could not take place without attempts by the mobilized strata in a thousand different spots to take their own path. It is also clear, however, that the Maoist faction has on the whole maintained everywhere ultimate control over the situation.

To equate the revolutionary students' criticism of consumer society in France with the Maoist denunciation of "economism" in China displays utter confusion. In the latter case, Stalinist delirium is combined with a will to divert the workers' real demands toward what is now becoming in China a pseudopolitical opium of the people and with an attempt to distract popular criticism of the bureaucratic regime by setting up a scapegoat, a faction of the bureaucracy, for them to eliminate.

To make even the vaguest comparison between the students' criticism of the universities, of culture, and of the relationship between teachers and students in France with the denunciation of professors and of "dogmatism" and with the "free discussions" that take place in China is also to display utter confusion. The real meaning of the latter operation appears in the light of its ultimate goal: to impose upon 700 million people a new Bible, that grotesque little red book that contains the rules for all truth, past, present, and future.

The Cultural pseudo-Revolution in China is remote-controlled from start to finish by the Maoist faction, as R[obert] Guillain aptly reminds readers of *Le Monde* (June 6, 1968).[23] It tirelessly denounces the "spontaneity cult" in the name of the one and only true thought—that of Mao. Finally, we should point out that the army, which is the final arbiter and the ultimate buttress of this whole process, has never been challenged. Its hierarchical structure intact, it remains both the pillar of bureaucratic society and the prime beneficiary of the crisis.

On the other hand, room should be made to dispel another false image of the May '68 crisis, for, let us repeat, it has not ceased to exert influence over the attitudes of many revolutionary students. This is the image of a failed or abortive proletarian socialist revolution. *Revolution*, because a sector of society has attacked the regime with radical goals in mind via methods of direct action; because the generalization of the strikes has given a national and all-inclusive dimension to the crisis, thereby objectively raising the question of power; and, lastly, because both government and administration have found themselves physically paralyzed and morally shattered. *Failed* or *abortive*, since the working class did not go on the attack against the powers that be—either because the bureaucratic apparatuses "prevented" it from playing its revolutionary role or because "conditions were not ripe," an expression that is of no value because it can be meant in any way whatsoever and however one pleases.

Taken separately, each one on its own, these statements are correct: there were features of a revolutionary situation, just as there was an absence of any political role on the part of the proletariat. Nevertheless, when one tries to fit the May events into a framework of a failed or abortive socialist revolution, when one judges what has been in relation to something that "might have been" and reconstructs what is happening on the basis of an image of what has been at another time and in another place instead of on the basis of reflection on the actual process and on its own intrinsic tendencies, one concocts a signification unrelated to the events.

To think of the May '68 crisis as a classical revolutionary crisis in which the principal actor did not play his appointed role is a total sham. This is not even to speak of a *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark; it is to speak of a *Hamlet* where the Prince is tortured not by the problem of avenging his father, but by that of purchasing a new jerkin to wear. What really happened was that *another* play was being performed. It is irrelevant that the actors, and particularly the lead part, played by the student movement, frequently repeated phrases and entire tirades taken from the classical repertoire that had only an apparent or an ambiguous relationship to the plot. This was the first great play by a new author, still probing his way, and the only public performances that have been staged so far were a few mere curtain raisers, at Berkeley, in Warsaw, and elsewhere. The play's central character has no predecessors among the classics. As always in the theater of history, it is a complex

and collective character, presented in a new guise and with unprecedented qualities. This character embodies youth, student youth in particular but not just student youth, and parts of the modern strata of society—especially the parts of the intelligentsia that have been integrated into its "culture"-producing structures. Of course, the reason why this character can create around itself real drama and animate this drama instead of giving rise to a mere incident is that it encounters other characters, themselves ready to take to the stage, like always, for motives and ends that are their own. Yet, as opposed to all theater, and as in the unique *King Lear*, the play is *history*, in that several separate and heterogeneous plots [*intrigues*] are woven together, and forced by events, time, and a common pole, to interact [*interférer*].

This common pole (here, opposition to the government) establishes a similarity between the May '68 crisis and the classical revolutions of the past two centuries. This similarity, however, is only apparent; it continues to mask two differences of much greater importance, just as it has done throughout the crisis. In a classical revolution, those groups fighting to *eliminate* the established regime are originally united. Their differences come to the surface and even become brutal conflicts once this common objective has been attained and the question of what kind of regime should replace it has been raised. This, by the way, is what gives them the clear-cut features of a permanent revolution (in the strict sense intended by Marx and Trotsky, and not in the vague sense in which it has been bandied about in the past few weeks). Once the initial, the least radical objectives of the revolution have been attained, the latent oppositions between the revolutionary protagonists become apparent, for now some strata are transformed into conservative guardians of the new order, and others, the most oppressed, are thus forced to turn to even more radical aims and actions.

The situation in May '68 is totally different. The students and workers were not even united on a negative objective. Among the students, at least among their revolutionary and active elements, the negative objective of opposition to the government was understood in a different sense than it was by the workers. For the former, the aim is to eliminate the government, whereas the great majority of workers, even though they do not favor the government, are absolutely unprepared to work toward its overthrow. A worker/student alliance cannot materialize under these conditions; it remains a mere wish, based upon a misunderstanding.

For this very reason, the crisis presents the paradoxical appearance of a permanent revolution filmed, if one may say so, twice in reverse. It begins with radical objectives and methods of action and advances backward toward discussions over percentages and toward surrender to the police without resistance of occupied buildings. Beginning with the revolt of a relatively privileged portion of society, which bears within itself and puts forth revolutionary demands, it induces the least favored strata of society to enter into action, but merely with limited, reformist demands. The enormous physical weight of millions of strikers, added to the disarray of the top leaders, thus creates a social crisis, but the very fact that this crisis really raises the question of power (which the mass of workers did not want at any moment to envisage), instead of deepening the crisis, facilitates its swift withdrawal toward the imaginary space of electoral activity.

To try to comprehend the specificity and the originality of the May '68 crisis is

to try to elucidate the signification of the respective behaviors of the two social groups that acted it out.

The working class's attitude cannot be chalked up to local factors; with minor alterations, it corresponds to a process that has been going on in all industrialized countries over the past twenty years. It is neither coincidental nor simply the effect of a screen the "working-class" bureaucracies would have placed between the proletariat and the revolution. We will not repeat what we already have said above on this subject, nor is this the place to return to analyses that have been made for a long time.[24] Yet, we must recall briefly the factors that have made the proletariat a revolutionary class for one hundred and fifty years, and the essential characteristics of its present historical situation.

To be brief: the proletariat's action—continuous and multiform, economic and political, "informal" and organized, reformist and revolutionary—on society has profoundly transformed society, but this action on society has remained, until now, inadequate to the task of revolutionizing it.

The proletariat has been a revolutionary class. Eighteen forty-eight and 1871 in Paris, 1905 and 1917 in Russia, 1919 in Germany and Hungary, 1925 and 1927 in China, 1936 to 1937 in Spain, 1956 in Poland and Hungary are neither our dreams nor our theories, but crucial events, switch plates in modern history. The proletariat has been the revolutionary class, not because Marx assigned it this role, but because of its real situation in production, in the economy and in society in general.

This situation is at the outset the one capitalism imposes, or aims at imposing: the transformation of the worker into an object; the destruction of the meaning of work at the point of production; material poverty and periodic unemployment in the economic sphere; exclusion from political life and from culture in the social realm. At the same time, the capitalist system—and this is its specific historical feature—permits, and even *forces* the proletariat to fight against the situation in which it finds itself.

Thus an unremitting combat begins at the point of production, and continues throughout the workday, against the capitalist organization of labor, its methods, its norms, its bureaucratic-mechanistic pseudorationality. This combat is embodied in the existence of "informal" groups as necessary units of production, in a parallel organization of the production process, and in an actual collectivization of workers opposed to the atomization the capitalist division of labor aims at imposing upon them. And it culminates in the objective of workers' management, an objective put forward during the revolutionary phases of this combat. On the economic level, there are struggles over economic demands; and on the political and social level, political struggles have succeeded over the past century in bringing about considerable transformations of the proletariat's situation, as well as of capitalism itself. Modern society is essentially a product of a century of class struggle. Never in history has there been another example of an oppressed and exploited class whose action has had similar results.

At the same time, however, we should note that the proletariat has not been able to revolutionize society or to instaurate its own power. Whether or not one adds "until now," this remains a crucial point.

One cannot really begin to reflect on this question until one understands the *con-*

tradiction that dominates the situation of the proletariat. Insofar as it has struggled against the essence of the system and not against accidental or external features of capitalism, it is a revolutionary class. The proletariat has struggled directly against the system not merely when it denies or negates this system but also when it *posits* the elements of a new social organization and the principles for a new civilization, both in the daily life of the factory and in its activity during the revolutionary phases of the struggle. And yet the proletariat has not been able to integrate, or to institute, or to retain these elements and to uphold these principles. Whenever the issue of going beyond the informal level has arisen, the proletariat has fallen back during this acute moment of the struggle, during this revolutionary phase, into the representational schemata, the methods of making/doing [*modes du faire*], and the institutional models of the dominant civilization. The mass trade-union and political organizations have thus aligned themselves with the structures and modes of operation of all the bureaucratic organizations that have ever been produced by capitalism; and where the proletarian revolution has seized power, this power has been abandoned, handed over to a "leading party" that is "representative" of the working class; the ideology and the practice of hierarchy wins increasing acceptance, and finally the entire capitalist philosophy of organization for the sake of organization and consumption for the sake of consumption seems to have penetrated into the proletariat.

Of course, all that might be chalked up to capitalism's hold over the proletariat and to the difficulty the latter experiences in breaking loose. Considered in historical terms, however, this "difficulty" refers us to something else—indeed, something known for a long time but never given adequate consideration. The proletariat does not and cannot create its own society within capitalist society, its own positive frames of reference and institutions that would remain under its control—as the bourgeoisie more or less succeeded in doing under the Ancien Régime. Thus, what it creates, it immediately loses. And this is the worst of losses. Its creations are not stolen from it but rather put to another use, diametrically opposed to the one for which they had been intended. It is not, as Kautsky and Lenin said, arguing from a false premise to reach a pernicious conclusion, that the proletariat is unable on its own to raise itself above a trade-union consciousness and thus should be inculcated with a "socialist" ideology produced by petit-bourgeois intellectuals. Such an ideology can only be, and in fact has only been, profoundly bourgeois. If there is anything that can guide us in reconstructing a revolutionary viewpoint, it can lie only in the truly socialist elements of such a viewpoint that the proletariat itself has produced in its activity *against* this pseudosocialist ideology. Yet these elements, which can be found in the obscurity of the informal organization on the shop floor and in workers' behavior at the point of production, as well as in revolutionary explosions, cannot maintain themselves, or develop, or, above all, be *instituted.* This is what has been called, in philosophical language, the proletariat's "negativity." Marx had already seen it and discussed it at length, except that he complemented this negativity with an (imaginary) positivity, that of the "laws of history."

But of course, negativity as pure negativity is only an abstraction, and therefore, at bottom a piece of speculative mystification. No historical class can be pure, absolute negativity. After every revolutionary crisis the proletariat has only been able

to fall back onto something "positive." As there was nothing solid to fall back on that would continue to provide material support, in an instituted form, to the revolutionary aim, inevitably it fell back upon the "positive" aspects of capitalism. As it could not fall back on a culture of its own, it fell back upon the existing culture. As the norms, values, and goals that have been its own at the height of its activity literally *have no meaning* in the daily life of capitalist society, it just had to adopt those of that society.

And this is, as a matter of fact, the *actual result* of the working-class struggles of the past hundred and fifty years. The result has exactly the same signification whether one examines the bureaucratization of "working-class" organizations or the "integration" of the proletariat into the process of capitalist expansion. Acceptance of bureaucratic organizational standards is just the flip side of the acceptance of capitalist goals in life, for they imply one another in philosophy, and they lean upon each other in reality. With these trade unions one can obtain only 5 percent, and if it is 5 percent that one wants, these unions will do.

Thus the age-old struggle of a revolutionary class has for the moment come to this doubly paradoxical result: the "integration" of the proletariat into modern capitalist society—and its entry into this society at the moment when the dominant mode of socialization is privatization.

What, then, is the present historical situation of the proletariat in modern countries, and what remains, beyond memories and ideological leftovers, of what made it a revolutionary class? Nothing specific remains. Nothing, certainly, from the quantitative point of view: in a typical industrialized country, 80 to 90 percent of the active population are dependently employed wage earners or salaried employees, but only 25 to 40 percent are *workers*; generally speaking, the industrial proletariat no longer constitutes a majority of those dependently employed, and its relative weight continues to decline. (The situation is still otherwise in countries like France or Italy, where a strong rural population is in the process of being absorbed by the towns, and hence also by industry, but even in these countries the ceiling for the industrial labor force will soon be reached.) Nothing remains from the qualitative point of view, either. Capitalism succeeds in satisfying the proletariat's economic demands one way or another; in fact, it has to satisfy these demands in order to continue functioning. The proletariat is not the only one to experience alienation in work and the wear and tear of consumer society; all strata of society experience it. We are even justified in asking ourselves whether these experiences are not felt even *more* acutely outside the proletariat, properly speaking. Categories of people in less unfavorable income brackets can attain more easily the stage of consumer saturation, can uncover more quickly the absurdity of this constant race toward always having something more, something else. Alienation in work and the irrationality and incoherency of bureaucratic "organization" can more readily be perceived by those strata that work outside the realm in which material goods are produced. At least within this realm the laws of matter themselves set a limit on bureaucratic absurdity, whereas bureaucratic absurdity tends to expand toward infinity in areas where nonphysical activities are performed, for in the latter case it needs no soil, it encounters no physical obstacles. This is precisely what became apparent in May '68 through

the revolutionary role played by the young, in particular the students, and through the action of a large number of teachers and intellectuals.

The role played by young people must be reexamined and its permanent and universal signification understood. The traditional frameworks of sociological thought (including Marxism) must be shattered. It must be pointed out that in modern societies youth, as such, is a *social category* underpinned by a division within society that is, in certain respects, more important than its division into classes.

Traditional criteria for explaining social divisions have lost their hold over hierarchical, bureaucratic, and multipyramidal social structures like those found in modern societies. Not only does property no longer have a simple and straightforward meaning, but even the division between directors and executants is breaking down: except at society's two extremes, a growing proportion of the population finds itself playing composite roles or living and working in intermediary situations. Income is ceasing to be a criterion—actually, it never was one. For purposes of reflection and sociopolitical practice, the relevant social division no longer can be based upon "status" or "estates," but on behavior patterns; and the former are less and less the univocally determining factors of the latter. The relevant division today is between those who accept the system as such and those who reject it.

Now, it is among the young as such that rejection of the system can be, and is, the most radical. This is so for a host of reasons, two of which are immediately evident. First of all, because of the profound crisis, anthropological in character, that the system is undergoing, the crumbling of frameworks, of values, and of imperatives has a particularly virulent effect on the young, for they are at the stage when personality is still gelling, seeking its orientation, and finding only the emptiness of what exists today. Furthermore, the relatively well-off material situation of almost all strata of society means that individual young people have not yet been caught in the traps of the system, let alone in its subtle mechanisms of psychoeconomic constraint. Now, perhaps the most important characteristic of today's youth movement is that, as a function of and on the basis of this "nonattachment"[25] and this "irresponsibility" that society imposes upon youth, the young reject *both* this society *and* this "nonattachment" and "irresponsibility" *at the same time*. And their activity and their goal of self-management give shape to this rejection.

It would be completely superficial, however, to see in this "nonattachment" and this "irresponsibility" only a transitory state of certain individuals at one stage in their lives. This state, while transitory for persons, is a permanent state for society. If you take the ten to fifteen statistically most numerous age classes in the population, you obtain about a third of the population that counts in social struggles (if not in elections). But this "nonattachment" and this "irresponsibility" (and also their virtual rejection) are a universal characteristic of man in modern society.

If indeed students in particular, and young people more generally, really have become a pole of revolutionary social action, they are so as the embodiment in its extreme form, and the typification in its purest state, of the general and profound condition of the modern individual. For today everyone is reduced to the situation of "nonattachment": only externally imposed habits tie them to jobs, ways of living, and norms of behavior that they no longer internalize or value. Everyone is reduced to a situation of "irresponsibility," since everyone is subject to an authority that no

longer dares even to assert itself as authority: everyone has formal, empty "rights" but no real power; everyone has some ridiculous job, more and more perceived as such; everyone's life is becoming filled with fake objects; everyone finds himself in a state of relative material "security" coupled with an anxiety "over nothing" [*sans objet*].

The general "proletarianization" of modern society is a fact—but an ambiguous one. If everyone has become a dependently employed wage earner or salaried employee, at the same time almost everyone has escaped poverty and insecurity.

The general "*juvenilization*" of society is just as certain, but much less ambiguous. Everyone has become nonattached and irresponsible, and people's only choice is to recognize or fool oneself about this. At the limit, governmental ministers can play at being ministers; they know very well that they really decide nothing and that they are not truly responsible for anything.

The student condition is, then, exceptional only in the sense that in it are condensed in pure form the most essential characteristics of the situation of modern man. Influenced certainly by the remnants of classical revolutionary ideology—in what it retains that is most *true* and, at the same time, most *abstract* under modern conditions—the students have thus represented an *anticipated revolution*, and this in two senses. First of all, by struggling against their present situation, they were struggling as well and especially in anticipation against their future situation—not, as people in the government stupidly remarked, for fear of being unemployed but from their certain knowledge of the nature of the "employment" awaiting them. An anticipated revolution also in a deeper sense, insofar as it expresses and prefigures what could be, should be, and one day surely will be the revolution against modern society.

Next, one must reflect on the fact that the core of the crisis has not been youth in general, but student youth in the universities and high schools, and the young—or the nonpetrified—part of the teaching professions, but also other categories of intellectuals. This too has a signification that, due to its universality, will be decisive for the future.

To indulge in endless discussions on the revolution in science and technology is a complete waste of time if one does not comprehend what it entails: first of all, that the education and culture industries are now and henceforth of greater importance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, than the steel industry and all other metalworking industries combined. Nor will the education and cultural industries cease to grow in size and importance.

Next, and even more significant, are the problems posed on all levels by the profound crisis of contemporary knowledge and science. (The broad mass of scientists have not yet even realized that this crisis exists; they merely undergo this crisis in ways now obscure to them.) So as not to beat around the bush, we may speak of this crisis as the *death* of science in its classically accepted sense and in all hitherto known senses of the term. It is the *death* of a certain way in which knowledge is fabricated and transmitted. It concerns the perpetual uncertainty as to *what* knowledge has been ascertained, what is probable, doubtful, obscure. It involves the indefinitely extended collectivization of the human support network of knowledge and, at the same time, the fragmentation ad infinitum of this knowledge just at the moment

when the imperious and enigmatic interdependence, or more precisely, the articulated unity, of all fields of knowledge is becoming more apparent than ever. Also in question is the relationship of this knowledge to the society that produces it, nourishes it, is nourished by it, and risks dying of it, as well as the issues concerning for whom and for what this knowledge exists. Already at present these problems demand a radical transformation of society, and of the human being, at the same time that they contain its premises. If this monstrous tree of knowledge that modern humanity is cultivating more and more feverishly every day is not to collapse under its own weight and crush its gardener as it falls, the necessary transformation of man and society must go infinitely further than the wildest utopias have ever dared to imagine. This transformation will require the individual to develop from the outset in a quite different manner. Through such development, the individual will have to become capable on its own of entertaining another relationship with knowledge, a relationship for which there is no analogy in previous history. It is not simply a question of developing the individual's faculties and capacities. Much more profoundly, it is a matter of the individual's relationship to authority, since knowledge is the first sublimation of the desire for power and therefore of one's relationship to the institution and to everything that the institution represents as fixed and final point of reference. All this is obviously inconceivable without an upheaval not only in existing institutions but even in what we intend by institution.

This is what is contained, though for the moment only in germinal form, in the movement of revolutionary students in France. To be specific, what is involved is the transformation of the relationship between teacher and student; the transformation, too, of the content of teaching; the elimination of the tendency to partition off each academic discipline from all others and the university from society. Either all that will simply remain a dead letter—and it is difficult to see how it could remain just that—or else it will constantly and more and more imperiously raise the issue of the upheaval just mentioned. It matters little whether students know this or not (and they were in part aware of it). It matters little whether they saw their activity as prelude or as part of a classical socialist revolution—which it is in some sense, provided that one fully understands the upheaval in the very content of this revolution as it has been envisaged until now. Just as the slogan "to live working or to die fighting" contained in potential form the proletarian revolutions of the century that followed, the objectives set by the French student movement already are sketching out the lines of force for the historical period now opening before us.

Such are the "objective" exigencies, in the realm of knowledge, of our contemporary era. They broaden and deepen immensely those that already have arisen in the realms of production and social organization. Such are the factors that make of youth, the students, and workers in the teaching and culture industries the equivalent of a new revolutionary vanguard in society.

But even if these sectors were enlarged to take in all modern sectors of society in a comparable situation, would they be able to play this role? Will they not sooner or later encounter a contradiction symmetrical to the one the proletariat faced? In other words, can they in an enduring way escape the grasp of the culture into which they are born? Do they have sufficient weight and adequate cohesiveness to play a

historical role? Can they acquire this weight by joining in an alliance with manual workers—which today seems even more difficult than it was in the past?

Here it would be not only illusory but profoundly and in principle wrong to try to reply to these questions that history poses to people's creativity with a theoretical analysis. This much, however, is for us certain: if there is a solution to these problems, it cannot be found outside a joining of manual with intellectual workers. And if such a union—nothing less than "natural"—is to be achieved, it will be realized only through a permanent activity of social-political labor whose modalities, structures, and ways of being remain to be invented almost in their entirety.

Notes

1. T/E: The March 22nd Movement, a disparate grouping of various left-wing student activists, was the outgrowth of an occupation of the administration building at Nanterre University in a suburb of Paris on March 22, 1968. Nanterre University sociology student Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who had been meeting with former S. ou B. members after the group's dissolution, participated in the occupation and soon became the most visible student leader of this movement and of the May 1968 events.

2. T/E: UNEF is the acronym for the Union nationale des étudiants de France, the National Union of French Students.

3. T/E: SNE Sup is the acronym for the National Union of Higher Education Instructors. Along with the UNEF, it called for a general strike to protest the police arrest of students at the Sorbonne on May 3 and the administration's subsequent suspension of classes.

4. T/E: The Grenelle Accords were signed on May 27, 1968, by the government and by trade-union leaders from the principal national labor confederations. Negotiations and the signing of the accords took place at governmental offices on the rue de Grenelle in Paris.

5. T/E: Georges Séguy (b. 1927) was the general secretary of the Communist-allied Confédération générale du travail (CGT), the General Labor Confederation, from 1967 until 1982.

6. T/E: Waldeck-Rochet (1905–1983) was general secretary of the French Communist party from 1964 until 1972.

7. T/E: CFDT is the acronym for the Confédération française démocratique du travail, the non-Communist French Democratic Labor Confederation, formed in 1964 when the majority of the Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens (CFTC, the French Confederation of Christian Workers) voted to become a secular labor organization. It is generally allied with the Socialists.

8. T/E: The CGT is the Communist-allied General Labor Confederation. See note 5 above.

9. T/E: Roger Garaudy (b. 1913) was a leading Communist intellectual and politician before his exclusion from the Party for his protest against the August 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

10. T/E: Eugène Descamps (b. 1922) was general secretary of the CFDT from 1961 until 1971. During the "period of 1944–1946" to which he refers, Stalinist labor militants physically attacked workers who went on strike without CGT authorization.

11. T/E: The SFIO was the acronym for the Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, a forerunner to the French Socialist party of today.

12. T/E: The Federation was the Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste (FGDS), the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left, which brought together the SFIO (see previous note) and the Radical party, fielding François Mitterrand as its presidential candidate in 1965.

13. T/E: Benoît Frachon (1892–1975) was general secretary of the CGT from 1944 until 1967.

14. T/E: Alfred Sauvy (1898–1990), a sociologist and demographer, directed the French National Institute of Demography.

15. T/E: Sganarelle is a character in several of Molière's plays who plays the part of a cuckold.

16. T/E: One of President Charles de Gaulle's first responses to the events of May 1968 was to propose a referendum on "participation." He later withdrew even this vaguely worded response to the student and worker protests, opting instead, as Castoriadis explains, for the dissolution of the Parliament and the calling of new parliamentary elections.

17. T/E: The UNR is the acronym for the Union pour la Nouvelle République (the Union for the

New Republic), the political party-movement founded in 1958 in Algiers that supported General Charles de Gaulle in his return to power.

18. T/E: See note 12.

19. T/E: Guy Mollet (1905–1975) was general secretary of the SFIO (see note 11) from 1946 until 1969.

20. T/E: These ordonnances refer to 1967 governmental decrees concerning social security.

21. T/E: The Front républicain was an electoral coalition of non-Communist socialist and "radical" forces that won a large number of seats in the January 1956 legislative elections.

22. T/E: Timed to coincide with President Charles de Gaulle's return to the offensive, a large demonstration of conservative opponents of the student and worker protests took place May 30 on the Champs-Elysées in Paris.

23. T/E: Robert Guillain, "La Révolution culturelle chinoise a préfiguré sur certains points événements français," *Le Monde*, June 6, 1968, pp. 1 and 12.

24. In the review *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, see especially "Le mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne" (nos. 31–33) and "Recommencer la révolution" (no. 35). [Now in *CMR 2*, pp. 47–258, and *EMO 2*, pp. 307–65; T/E: translated as "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" (*PSW 2*, pp. 226–315) and "Recommencing the Revolution" (chapter 3, this volume).]

25. T/E: The French word is *disponibilité*. To capture another aspect of this word, it could also be translated as "availability."

12
The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement

For the republication of my *Socialisme ou Barbarie* texts, my initial idea was to separate those devoted to workers' demands and their forms of struggle and organization from those relating to the political organization of militants (the "party question"). Upon reflection, this solution seemed to me to present many more drawbacks than advantages, since in my work the two questions have been from the outset constantly interconnected. But above all, it reflects and expresses a position that for a long time has no longer been mine. Indeed, this solution is tantamount to accepting and ratifying the idea that there are two fields of reality separated not only in fact but in principle. In the first, one encounters workers preoccupied with their immediate demands who try to achieve these demands through specific forms of struggle and join together toward this end in organizations with well-defined (essentially trade-union) objectives. In the other field move political militants who are different from the workers not physically but, what is of much greater weight, qualitatively, in that they define themselves by a coherent ideology and a corresponding "maximum" program, and who organize among themselves according to considerations relating solely to the effectiveness of their action, as this effectiveness is defined by them. How then can a connection be made between these two fields? On an explicit level, only in one way: from the fact that the workers' concerns are one of the givens in the various tactical problems raised by the militants, these problems themselves be-

Originally published as "Introduction: La Question de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier," *EMO 1*, pp. 11–120. [T/E: An excerpted version, "Sur l'histoire de la bourgeoisie et l'institution du capitalisme," previously appeared in *Connexions*, 7 (1973), pp. 80–93. A partial translation "from the French by Brian Singer and into English by Patricia Tummons," which was entitled "On the History of the Workers' Movement," appeared in *Telos*, 30 (Winter 1976–77), pp. 3–42. I have consulted it on occasion.]

ing inserted within the overall problem of their strategy. In other words, the militants are basically faced with the task of knowing how the workers' immediate struggles can be influenced by the militants' own ideas and their political organization; how, too, these struggles can be induced to transcend their "immediate" character, thereby rising to the level of the "historical" concerns of the organization.

Like so many other ideas that reign supreme in the penumbra of the implicit but that ill bear the light of day, this distinction, too, once it is clearly and forthrightly affirmed, is quite striking as to the enormity of the postulates of which it makes use, their incoherency, and, finally, their mutual incompatibility. Indeed, it presupposes a series of separations—between the "economic" and the "political," between these two spheres and social life as a whole, between "the immediate" and "the historical"—which do have a partial and relative validity, but which, when taken absolutely, are devoid of meaning from the theoretical standpoint as much as and especially from the perspective of any revolutionary making/doing [*faire*].[1] In making this distinction, one necessarily tends to confine the proletariat to a perception of its immediate economic interests and to an exclusive preoccupation with these interests (even if this idea does not take on the extreme form Lenin gave it in *What Is to Be Done?*, namely, that, left to itself, the working class can attain only a "trade-union" consciousness). At the same time, it appeals to the proletariat as the depositary of a historically unprecedented revolutionary mission. Let it be said in passing: The example of all those who, from Rosa Luxemburg to today's "council communists," have affirmed their faith in the creative spontaneity of the masses while at the same time trying to prove "scientifically" the inevitability of an *economic* collapse of capitalism that would trigger the revolution shows how deeply this last antinomy (and the corresponding reduction of the proletariat to blind instrument of a historical Reason, whatever else one proclaims) has left its mark on the attitudes of all individuals, groups, and currents that invoke Marxism to any extent. That one might appreciate their "subjective attitude" more than that of the Leninists does nothing to prevent the former attitude from belonging to the same universe of thought, while also being less coherent than the latter. The (bureaucratic) logic of the position of a 1903-style Leninist is clear: left to themselves, the workers can undertake only trade-union activities; the action of the Party can awaken only a small number of them to the political life; *therefore*, only a systemic crisis that reduces them to a state of misery and unemployment can make the proletarian mass understand the correctness of the Party's program. But why does Rosa Luxemburg feel obliged to prove that capitalist accumulation sooner or later encounters an absolute and insurmountable limit? (And why do certain of her emulators, such as [Lucien] Laurat and even [Fritz] Sternberg, search for the precise date at which this limit will be attained?) What is this mysterious privilege that ensures that only an *economic* collapse of capitalism can actualize the masses' revolutionary potentialities, potentialities that, moreover, are considered to be unlimited in scope? If life under capitalism is preparing laboring people for the positive invention of a new society that is inconceivable without an immense upheaval in all established forms of life (and even is equivalent, to be quite precise, to the dethronement of the economic from the sovereign position in which capitalism has placed it), laboring people must be sensitive to all aspects of the crisis of instituted society; and any particular rupture of

the regular functioning of that society, whatever the cause—economic, political (whether domestic or foreign), cultural—can in principle provide the occasion, the *kairos*, for an outbreak of revolutionary activity on the part of the masses (as historical experience, moreover, has shown). Inversely, if at all costs we must assure ourselves that an *economic* collapse of capitalism is unavoidable, it is because we are thinking that these same masses, who we have just affirmed are going to create a new world—and who therefore are willing and able to do so—are never motivated except by their economic situation. Here the contradiction reaches the height of the grotesque. The main point, however, is that one's representation of laboring people has then become the same as that formed by the bosses (at least, the representation the bosses used to have of them). Indeed, it is strictly equivalent to saying that a worker never works except under constraint or with the lure of a bonus, and that laboring people will make a revolution only when forced to do so by their economic situation.

Beyond these considerations, what really matters is for us to shed light on the foundation for this series of separations, and in particular the one ultimately governing them all: that between the "immediate" and the "historical"—this being also what lies behind the position the political theorist arrogates unto himself when he places himself in the situation of scientific strategist and treats the manifestations of laboring people's activity as data for the tactical problem history has charged *him* with solving. The foundation for these distinctions is the postulate that the past, present, and future truth of historical change is here and now the possession of an essentially complete theory, which is itself possessed by a political organization; whence it follows necessarily that the "historical role of the proletariat" exists only inasmuch as the latter does what the theory knows and predicts that it must do and will do. What is at stake here, therefore, is not simply, or even essentially, the capitalist axiom of the primacy of the economic (the economic is privileged, rather, insofar as it appears, illusorily, as scientifically theorizable and foreseeable), but the axiom, underlying all Greco-Western history, of the sovereignty of the theoretico-speculative. "It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* [*se représente*] as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do," wrote Marx—the *young* Marx.[2] But who then knows and theoretically possesses in his custody "*what the proletariat is*"? Marx in 1845—or even better, obviously, Marx in 1867. *Where* is this *being* of the proletariat that will "historically compel" it to do what it has to do? In Marx's head. What, in this regard, is the difference between all these philosophers whom Marx mercilessly mocks because they make the history of the world pass through their own thought, and Marx himself? There is none. "What this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat at the moment *regards*," that is to say, the "immediate"—let us pronounce the word: the "phenomenon" or the "appearance"—masks here, too, as everywhere, being or essence, which is inseparable, as it should be, from necessity (here presented as "historical" compulsion) and is the object of a knowledge attained through necessary reasoning. Theory and theory alone gives access to this essence, as well as to the interpretation of the more or less contingent appearances—such as, for example, the "representation" the workers make for themselves of what they want—that are coordinated with and ultimately subordinate to it. Theory alone allows one to recognize

whether, in doing this, that, or the other, the proletariat acts under the influence of mere "representations" or under the compulsion of its being. At what moment can one speak, then, of the proletariat's autonomy or creativity? At no moment, and less than ever at the moment of revolution, since for the proletariat this is precisely the moment of absolute ontological necessity in which history finally "compels" it to manifest its being—of which, until then, it has remained ignorant, but of which others are aware for it. In saying this, is at least Marx himself autonomous? No, he is in thrall to Hegel, Aristotle, and Plato: he sees (*theorei*) the being (*eidos*) of the proletariat, he inspects its workmanship, he discovers its hidden power (*dunamis*), which necessarily will become revolutionary act (*energeia*). The practical continuation of this speculative posture will follow quite naturally and, words changing with the times, the philosopher-king of old will in the end be called coryphaeus of revolutionary science.[3]

It is not easy to break with an attitude that, lying at a much deeper level than opinions, outside influences, or particular social and historical situations, is rooted in what for three thousand years or perhaps longer we have become habituated to posit as being, knowledge, and truth, and ultimately in the almost insurmountable necessities of thought. I dare say I know what I am talking about [*j'en parle en connaissance de cause*], for at the same time that the critique of bureaucracy and of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was leading me to the idea of the autonomy of the proletariat, as well as to its direct consequences—namely, that there is no "consciousness" of the proletariat outside the proletariat itself; that the working class cannot exercise its power by any sort of "delegation"; that, if it cannot direct itself and direct society, no one can do this for it in its stead[4]—I maintained for a time a position on the revolutionary party that still made of it, despite the application of a number of restrictions and reinterpretations, a de jure class "leadership" [*direction*]. This was merely the consequence of the philosophical situation retraced above. The ultimate underpinning for the arguments found in the text on "The Revolutionary Party"[5] is, in effect, this: Either ultimately we do not know what we are saying, or what we are saying is true—and, in this case, the proletariat's development toward revolution will be the effective realization of this truth that, for our part, we are working out starting right now on the theoretical level. The impossibility of reconciling this idea on a formal level with the idea of the proletariat's autonomy (which actually becomes, under these conditions, purely formal) and on the level of content with the idea of the revolution as upheaval in inherited modes of living and of rationality (therefore also of prerevolutionary theoretical "truths") was recognized rather early on (this is the "contradiction" described in the July 1952 text, "Proletarian Leadership").[6] Yet, it was still not possible, for reasons already given, to go beyond—or, better, to short-circuit—this antinomy until the traditional conception of the nature, role, and status of theory (and, by way of consequence, Marxism itself) had been put into question. Begun in the first part of "On the Content of Socialism" (*CS I*, drafted in the winter of 1954–55),[7] this process of requestioning was powerfully accelerated and, in my view, enriched by the 1955 strikes in France, in England, and in the United States[8] and by the events of 1956 in Russia, in Poland, and in Hungary.[9] The implications that follow for the organization of revolutionary militants were clearly drawn in "Bilan, perspectives, tâches" (March

1957),[10] in *CS II* (July 1957),[11] and finally in "Proletariat and Organization, I" (*PO I*, written during the summer of 1958).[12]

The reader will therefore find collected here[13] writings bearing on the organization of militants, as well as writings analyzing the signification of specific workers' struggles. New texts will begin to address these problems.[14] Nevertheless, a preliminary question of decisive importance must first be broached here: the question of the history of the workers' movement.

Let us start with a surprising and brutal piece of evidence, a summary judgment sure to vex fastidious souls: The question of the *history* of the workers' movement has never before been posed in a serious fashion. What has usually been presented as such is merely a description of sequences of facts, at best an analysis of this or that great "event" (the Commune, the Russian Revolution, June 1936, etc.). When it comes to the interpretation of these facts and events as a whole, to an interrogation of the meaning of what has been unfolding for two (and even six) centuries in a growing number of countries and now all over the planet, the available choices are limited. There is Stalinist hagiography–for example, the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*–in which one can watch the brilliant engineers of the locomotive of history drive history forward despite ambushes and obstacles planted on the rails by capitalists and their spies. There is the Trotskyist melodrama, an infinitely sad affair in which a proletarian revolution, objectively ripe for sixty[15] years, is each time on the verge of success–and each time fails due to the "errors" and "betrayals" of the lousy leaders it has inexplicably chosen for itself. There are also the nonsymphonic variations of a few philosophers who are as unfamiliar with revolution as they are with Marxism, yet full of solicitude for both. Sometimes they inquire into the possibility that universal history has been off the rails since 1923; sometimes they try to derive the truth of a century of actual history as by-product of a new "reading" of the *1844 Manuscripts* or the 1857 *Grundrisse* (but perhaps the real truth, jotted in some notebook in 1843, has been destroyed forever by the gnawing criticism of mice; are we therefore to remain irrevocably blind to our surroundings?); and sometimes, finally, they reactivate the Cartesianism imbibed with the milk of their headmaster and mock the very idea of a history of the proletariat, instead concentrating exclusively on the acts of a moral-political cogito struggling with absolute evil, a cogito that has appeared to them in the successive incarnations of Stalin, Duclos,[16] Gomulka, and Mao.

We are trying to grasp the term *history* here in its full depth. There exists, of course, an immense literature bearing on "the history of the workers' movement" in this or that country or period. With rare exceptions (among which is E. P. Thompson's admirable book, *The Making of the English Working Class*),[17] this literature belongs to what is called factual history [*histoire événementielle*]. Here the dates of strikes and insurrections replace those of battles; the names of leaders or heroic militants, those of kings and generals; sometimes, the accent is placed on the activities of the masses, which is already more satisfying but hardly differs, qualitatively speaking. We need not recall here the value of this historiography, or its limits.

There also exists a literature that has been developing for a long time, and that (like historiography in general) is oriented toward the statistical, economic, sociolog-

ical, or cultural analysis of the situations underlying events and movements involving the proletariat. For lack of a better term, it may be labeled analytical historiography. Even less than in the preceding case can its value be challenged. It is obviously essential to know the quantitative growth of the proletariat; its geographical, industrial, occupational distribution; its internal differentiation and the changes it has undergone; the disappearance of old trades and the appearance of new skills; the evolution of its living standards and life-styles; their deviation from those of other social strata; changes in its mores, collective norms, vocabulary, representations, aspirations; the relationship of working-class strata to the organizations and ideologies that claim to represent them and to the institutions and rules of established society—just as it is important to relate these phenomena to each other and to the overall evolution of capitalism and those of its aspects that most affect the working-class condition (technical changes, economic cycles, ongoing transformations in social organization, etc.). Without such positive knowledge—which, it must not be forgotten, is, like all positive knowledge, essentially interminable and, beyond protocol statements, eternally in suspense as to its validity—one has no access to the object: it is in and through such knowledge that the object happens to present itself.

But precisely *what* "object," and what is its status? Let us leave aside for a moment the usual responses—we will return to them—and note that the question is always implied when one does historical research, even if historians do not know it, or act as if the response went without saying. Whatever his particular field, the historian invariably postulates the existence of a historical entity underlying the unity of his work. If he refuses to posit its existence or to raise it as a general question, he still settles the question concretely on the factual level. Of course, this question appears to him as bearing almost exclusively on the frontiers of his particular theme, the delimitation and limitation of this theme, therefore as an essentially negative question: What does not belong to this field, where does such and such a period end? But obviously much more is involved here: this negation is only the flip side of a position that has not been made explicit, and *that* is what really matters to us.

Before going any further, it is useful to open a parenthesis. Our subject is the question of the history of the workers' movement: we cannot discuss it without developing a series of considerations that might seem abstract, "philosophical," useless, even ridiculous to those who claim to be interested only in action and struggle. These people perhaps should stop their agitation a moment and try to gauge the incalculable weight of the naive metaphysics that the tiniest phrase in their tracts, the apparently most simple and most solid idea they have in their heads, conveys. As others have noted before, finance ministers and capitalists love to think of themselves as "men of action" and to believe that their ideas about [classical economic] liberalism, balanced budgets, or the gold standard are solid teachings of reality and practice that thereby authorize them to hold in contempt the nebulous theories of doctrinaire thinkers—forgetting, and most often not even knowing, that what they profess is only the most recent of countless waterings down of nebulous theories of a few eighteenth-century economists. It also has been noted that the least intelligent scientists sneer when reminded of the philosophical questions situated at the foundations of their activity—for the sole reason that they are immersed in a metaphysical ocean so thick (and filled with these fantastic constructs that are "things,"

"causes," "effects," "space," "time," "identity," "difference," etc.) that they clearly cannot *see in it*. Graver still, however, is the case of the militant who talks all the time about classes, laws of history, revolution, socialism, productive forces, the State, and power, curiously believing that in these vocables, and in his handling of them, ideas play no part, that he is dealing here with strange things that are both solid and transparent at the same time—and who, for this very reason, is completely enslaved to past theoretical and philosophical conceptions whose significations have already been fixed, all the more so as he can know neither what these conceptions are, nor where they come from, nor, therefore, finally, *where they are leading him*. May he, for once, the moment he reaffirms that the history of humanity is the history of the struggle between classes, trip over his words because he has been asked, Where and when have I learned what history, humanity, struggle, and classes are?

Let us suppose that this militant activist has heard us, and let us take the case of Rome. What is Rome ("Roman history")? What is the nature and the origin of this unity one inevitably postulates when speaking of the "history of Rome"? What is the relation that *brings together* [*met ensemble*] the struggle of the plebeians from the fifth to the second century B.C. and Elagabalus, the organization of the legions and the *jurisdictio* of the praetors, the speeches of Cicero, the development of the colonies, and Hadrian's Wall? All of that "belongs" to the history of Rome, but "belongs" in what sense? Certainly not in the sense in which the number 2 belongs to the set of natural integers; nor in the sense in which the Earth belongs to the solar system; nor even in the sense in which Irma's injection dream belongs to Freud. That a heteroclite combination of external criteria (most often simply inherited from a "scientific" tradition) somehow or other permits the historian to demarcate his daily work is evident; evident, too, that this is unsatisfactory, save if one is interested only in the distribution of university chairs or (but this is already much less simple) in a library's system of classification.

These external criteria (and the habitual responses to which we earlier alluded) would not be worth mentioning at all if they did not allow us to shed light on certain aspects of the question under discussion and of the nonconscious metaphysics that, here again, underlies "scientific" attitudes. Borrowed, as a general rule, from "natural" notions and from everyday conceptualizations, they lean, like the latter, on a naive metaphysics of "substance." Beyond trivial cases, none, taken separately, are decisive; no combination thereof furnishes the necessary and sufficient conditions for the constitution of a historical object. It is not the identity of the language that is the foundation for the unity of the Roman world, since (beyond the fact that the "unity" of the language through its history refers us to another enigma) the eastern half of the Empire takes part in this unity without ever having been latinized, any more than it is the continuity of state (or, more generally, "institutional") structures, since such continuity persists until the end of Byzantium, and Byzantium is not Rome; nor is it the contiguity of the geographical territory in which this history unfolds, since it is Roman history that creates this *historically* contiguous territory, and since other historical processes later will break this unity apart (or in any case will profoundly modify its character). If, on the other hand, this unity is posited as unity of "causal" chains, of "influences," and of "interactions," how can one not see—unless one has recourse to the fictitious case of a purely isolated historical fact—that

every cut in the connective tissue necessarily involves a degree of arbitrariness and that the basis for any cut would require justification if one does not want to treat the historical object as a pure artifact of the historian's making? It is perfectly legitimate to speak of *the Mediterranean world* at the time of Philip II, but just as legitimate to ask in what way and why it is a matter here of *a world.*

Recognition of this degree of arbitrariness most often leads to a pseudocritical extremism (quite akin to positivism and pragmatism) of the following sort: "Consciousness carves fact into the amorphous matter of the given"; the historian (like the physicist) sovereignly imposes organization upon chaos; the organizing principles involved are drawn solely from the exigencies of his theoretical consciousness. This view is already untenable when it comes to nature, where consciousness cannot carve just anything it chooses or however it wishes, any more than it can guarantee that the forms it constructs will necessarily find a material "corresponding" to them. It becomes simply absurd when it comes to society and history. For here it is the "material" itself that gives itself out as organized and organizing, that posits itself as a forming-formed ["material"]. The historian may have a lot to say about the true or illusory character of the unity of the Athenian demos, of the Roman people, or of the modern proletariat; that does not prevent him from encountering in his "material" such statements as *edoxe te boule kai to demo* (it seemed right to the boule and to the demos), *senatus populusque Romanus* . . . , or a crowd singing, "Producers, let us save ourselves."[18] More generally speaking, and even if, upon analysis, it is revealed to be a delusion, a myth, or an ideology, reference to the self is *in reality* constitutive of the individual, of the tribe, of the people. Can, moreover, self-reference be simply myth or ideology? Even if its content is mythical, ideological, or, more generally, imaginary—it is necessarily and always also that—its existence transcends this type of analysis, for without the *fact* of a representation of shared belonging to a tribe or to a people (and whatever the content of this representation), there is no tribe or people—any more than there is an individual without the fact of an identificatory representation, no matter how delusory its content. But the reference to the self of the Athenians, of Rome, or of the proletariat is the reference of *who* to *what?* It is at this moment that the Cartesian philosopher and the positive scientist (to whom undoubtedly the reference of John Smith to John Smith has always seemed clear and indubitable), rather than go off kilter [*d'y perdre leur latin*], shrug their shoulders, speak of improper totalizations, and denounce the fabrication of entities and beings of reason.

Let us consider, more generally, what is at the heart of every social-historical formation: the complex or, better, the *magma* of social imaginary significations, in and through which each formation organizes itself and its world.[19] A social-historical formation is constituted by instituting itself, which means, in the first place (though not solely): by instaurating a magma of significations (terms and referrals [*renvois*]) that are social (valid for all members of the formation without necessarily being known as such) and imaginary (not reducible to anything "real" or "rational"). Theoretical analysis will be able to perform a series of decompositions and recompositions on what manifests itself at the living surface of the formation under consideration. (It will show, for example, that the most important connections are not to be found where the participants explicitly believe them to be situated.) But what it will find,

as principle and decisive moment of the latent organization it unveils, will still be a magma of imaginary significations that is posited by the social-historical formation under consideration and that is modified throughout its history—or, to be more precise: whose continuous modification constitutes a decisive dimension of this history—and with regard to which one's analysis *is not free*. For the difficulties one encounters when it comes to apprehending and describing significations from other times and other places in terms comprehensible for us (difficulties that end up turning into ultimate impossibilities), far from allowing our reconstructions to be free, bear witness precisely to that which, independent of our constructions, resists them. We need only recall that, however ingenious the theorist, the material, the object itself, will prevent him from making unlimited enrichment and expansion a central signification of traditional Balinese culture—or of saintliness a dominant signification of capitalist culture.

Thus, no philosophical or epistemological artifice can eliminate the *proper being* of the social-historical object; nothing can mask the fact that Rome, Athens, the Peloponnesian War, the European feudal world, romantic music, the Russian Revolution *exist* (have existed) as much as, if not more than, tables, galaxies, or vectorial topological spaces. Those who cannot see this ought to refrain from talking about society and history and take up mathematics, crystallography, or entomology (while taking care to avoid theoretical questions even in these fields). Plato spoke of those for whom solely "that which they can grasp with their own hands" exists. Modern man has no hands, he has only instruments and instrumental (pseudo)concepts. For him exists only what his instruments can pick up, only what allows itself to be conceptualized in the most impoverished sense of the term, to be formalized or put into equations. What should be stigmatized today is the imposture that presents as the sole reality that which obeys (partially, provisionally, and ironically) a few scanty rules of conceptualization, computation, and "structural" tabulation.

We find ourselves therefore faced with the question raised by the proper being of the social-historical object. The question begins thus: In what way and why does this inexhaustible series of facts belong to the history of Rome? It culminates in this: What, during ten centuries, *makes itself* as Rome? (This question can neither be confused with, nor absolutely separated from, this other one: How does Rome present itself to other social-historical entities, how is it apprehended by these entities?—a question that includes, of course, the scientific or philosophical apprehension of Rome by us today. It is upon the terrain created by this apprehension that the discourse we are expounding here can exist, and the same goes for its refutation, but neither one is possible unless something gives itself out as Rome.) At the same time, we should ask ourselves: Why does this question seem to have been, until now, the object of bitter denial?

The type of being to which belongs *that which*, for ten centuries, makes itself as Rome, has no name in any language—and, to be truthful, hardly could have one. It is certainly not a fictitious appellation or a scientific *constructum*. Neither is it "thing," or "subject," or "concept," nor simple composite of "subjects," group, or crowd. It is the history of Rome that materially, juridically, and ontologically produces the Romans as much as the Romans produce the history of Rome. It is through the history of Rome that the Romans accede to their *quiddity*. Nor is it a

set of definite institutions, since these institutions are themselves in perpetual flux and since this history best makes itself known through its capacity to find in itself the resources to modify its institutions, thus rendering possible its continuation. This entity belongs to the region of social-historical objects, which inherited thought has in fact neither known how to nor been able to recognize in its irreducible specificity. It is not some accidental deficiency but the signature and character of inherited thought that the social-historical object, when it has not been pulverized into a heap of empirical determinations, has been able to be reflected upon only in terms of a metaphysics alien to it. Inherited thought knows and can know only three primitive types of being: the thing, the subject, and the concept or idea—and their junctions, combinations, elaborations, and syntheses; and the social-historical object absolutely cannot be grasped as thing, subject, or concept, any more than as junction, *universitas*, or system of things, subjects, and ideas. I cannot discuss here the question in its own right, nor can I fully justify my statement. I will try to render it explicit by opposing to it three authors whose doctrine might seem to contradict it: Aristotle, Hegel, Marx.[20]

Aristotle has long been regarded—and, in a sense, rightly so—as the father of "holism," of the conception that posits the "whole" as something other and more than the junction, the assemblage, the combination of its "parts." This conception obviously finds its best illustration in the case of the living being, of what in modern times has been called the "organism," with the full weight with which this term has been charged. As concerns matters here, the *Politics* provides a strong formulation of this idea: by its nature (*physei proteron*), the city (*polis*) precedes the individuals comprising it. What is this nature? On this occasion, Aristotle takes the time to specify his view once again: nature is end (*e de physis telos estin*). What then is the nature—that is to say, the end and the completion—of the city? "The city arises [*advient*] for the sake of living, but is for the sake of the good life" (*ginomene men tou zen eneka, ousa de tou eu zen*). The city arises and is *for the sake of something* (*eneka tinos*), it has a final cause both in becoming and in being: the individual (the human individual, who otherwise would be "wild beast or god," *therion e theos*) cannot live outside the city's "becoming" and cannot live well outside the city's "being." The opposition (profound, obscure, and liable to unending interrogation) of becoming-being (*ginetai-esti*) is here of no interest in its own right, but the following interpretation seems not easily contestable: The city begins to exist in order to render life possible for men (who cannot live as men without it). It is therefore, in the domain of becoming, a logical *proteron*: the de facto (brute) existence of the city *logically* precedes the de facto existence of individuals as human beings, but the city *"is" for the sake of* rendering the good life of men possible; it is impossible (or at least extremely difficult) to live well (and not even certain that one could always die well) outside a *good* city. In the domain of being, therefore, the *quality* of the city is, for the quality of living of men, both a *de facto* and *logical* presupposition (if one grants, at least, that the good life in a bad city is logically contradictory).

It is striking, then, to note the reversal of the immediate meaning of the argument. In the order of becoming, the city is inconceivable as assemblage of individuals: it precedes them. In the order of being, however, the essence of the city

is defined, as is the essence of all things, by its end, and the city is not its own end, it has its end in the good life of individual men (the good life, need it be specified, having in all this an ethical and not material sense). The being of the city is defined by reference to a goal [*finalité*], and this goal in its turn by the accomplishment (the good life) of the individual subject. And this consideration must in the end subordinate all others: the city draws its genuine being from the fact that it is, qua de facto city, condition for the existence of de facto individuals, which are, like the good order that makes the good city, condition for the existence of individuals who live the good life. It is the ethical goal, referred to the subject of a good life, that constitutes the essence of the city and grounds its being. From the highest standpoint, the city *is* because man is, to use modern language, ethical subject, and *in order that* he might realize himself as such.[21]

What are the underpinnings of this way of thinking? It is the indisputable and undisputed character of the idea of the *priority* of one term in relation to another, therefore, the requirement that an *order*, a *hierarchical* order, always be established between thinkable terms. Less apparent, but even more influential, is the consequence that if everything is to be thinkable, all terms must be of *a single* order, or else one must predominate over all others. To the extent that several appear, notably a causal order and a final order, the difference between them must be abolished, either by subordinating one to the other or by proving that in truth they belong to one and only one order. Hegel (and Marx) will follow this second path, Aristotle the first when he posits *final causation* as ultimately supreme. The gulf separating these thinkers, however, is infinitely smaller than it at first appears. Finality is posited here as *ethical* goal, immanent to the individual subject (which will later be replaced by the World Spirit or humanity as a whole; the *content* of this goal will be enlarged at the same time); it follows immediately and in all instances that social-historical *making/doing* [*faire*] can never be seen as such and for itself, but is always to be reduced to a *well-doing* (or ill-doing). (Already for Aristotle himself, the reduction is to technical or ethical well-doing, the former being subordinated to the latter.) This well-doing can be thought and judged in accordance with hierarchized norms, themselves suspended from the One Sovereign Good (the representation and concrete interpretation of which obviously will vary over the course of history).

Are we really obliged to suffer the humiliation of passing through these Caudine Forks? The social-historical has no such relation to any goal, however defined. Rome is not for anything (and not for-itself, of course).[22] Rome is, it has been, and that is all. It happens that our world would not be what it is (nor what we say) if Rome had not existed; we cannot for all that erect ourselves into the end of its existence. Certainly Aristotle, who did not like infinite regressions, would point out that such an argument would insert our raison d'être into the existence of those who will follow us, and so on without end. It may be that the good life of the individual man is the highest ethical and political end. Nevertheless, we cannot, before our inquiry even starts, reduce the very being of the social-historical to this goal, or limit our attempt to understand what *makes itself* in history to a comparison of actual cities with the norm of the good city, nor can we forget that the *effective* possibility of making reference, rightly or wrongly, to such a norm is itself a product of actual *effective* history just as much as the idea of the good life of the subject as supreme end. And

if the social-historical were always to be conceived by reference to *a* goal, it would always have to be able to be conceived by reference to *one* overall figure in which all goals are ordered; and what could that be if not an organized community, what Aristotle knew as and named *polis*, and which we might name determinate people or society, or in any case (borrowing precisely the Platonic and Aristotelian term) a collectivity that is *autarchic* as concerns life's essentials. Under this argument, the *political* community would have to be able to gather within itself and subsume under its logic and its ontology everything that appears in history (it is for this reason that the economy is and has to be treated within the *Politics*). That is not possible, however. The overall figure of the autarchic and politically unified community—whether it be tribe, city, people, Empire, or *cosmopoliteia* of all humanity—is not a figure to which all other social-historical figures are necessarily and essentially coordinated and subordinated. The Dionysian cult or Buddhism, the English language or the capitalist firm, the Baroque or Western science since the Renaissance, Romanticism or the workers' movement cannot be grasped as well-hierarchized and integral articulations or moments in the life of a political community or of a definite plurality of such communities; and still less, obviously, as thinkable within a well-determined network of goals, be they ethical or what have you.

Despite the enormous enlargements and upheavals brought about by Hegel, the basic theoretical situation was not fundamentally altered by this great thinker. In reality, these changes merely served to consolidate the Aristotelian framework by enabling it to welcome twenty additional centuries of experience. As concerns our question, and from our point of view, Hegel can be represented as pushing to the limit the Aristotelian problematic and its responses; he goes as far as one can within the logico-ontological framework set by Aristotle without bursting it apart. To be sure, the autarchic community is explicitly historicized (and thereby ceases, in a sense, to be autarchic). Thus, what can appear in the Aristotelian text and context as mere inorganic *juxtaposition*, coexistence, or succession of de facto cities without any internal relations of order, is here *organized*. The question Aristotle does not raise—namely, Why and *for what* are there *several* cities?—becomes for Hegel the central concern. Nevertheless, Hegel is only responding here to an exigency that, in principle, derives from Aristotelian thought; he is merely filling in what appears as a deficiency in this thought according to its own criteria, filling this gap in according to norms Aristotelian thought itself has posited: this is done by subjecting historical succession to the schema of hierarchical order, by incorporating the idea of finality into this order, by responding to the *why* of the existence of several cities with a *for what thing*, this plurality being there for the progressive and dialectical realization of Reason in history. To be sure, the particularity of the figure of the city has been transcended as well, the people becoming the central figure of the historical sphere. This is forced on Hegel not only by the accumulation of empirical data with which he was confronted but also by more profound considerations that are connected to the prolongation and generalization of Aristotelian schemata. The ethical finality conferred upon the individual man and upon his good life has to be transcended, since it is doubly limited (by the particularity of the individual and that of the ethical moment), but transcended in order to be brought back into the universal finality of Reason. And Reason, as Hegel says, is an "operation performed in con-

formity to an end." As this Reason neither can nor should [*ne devant et ne pouvant*] be limited by anything outside itself, it has to be able [*doit pouvoir*] to gather within itself (or, what boils down to the same thing, to be present in) all the manifestations of historical life. The political organization, or the State, even if it retains a privileged character, is only one of these manifestations (and of course the city is not its universal form); an intermediary figure is needed, at each historical stage, to unify them all, and this figure is the people.[23] The latter allows a resumption of everything within the teleological order: all manifestations of historical life become "moments in the life of a people," coordinated and subordinated to its activity and to its existence as historical people, incarnations in which the "spirit of the people" under consideration becomes visible for itself and for all. This "spirit of the people," moment of "the spirit of the world," is certainly not—any more than the latter—a "subject" in the usual sense of the term. Nevertheless, both are in a much stronger sense, the Hegelian sense. Indeed, it should be recalled that "the Absolute is subject"; what matters here is not this or that interpretation of the ontological category of the subject but this category itself, which, here, reabsorbs all limitation and is equal to Being itself. The oppositions between reality and concept, between substance, subject, and idea, have been "raised" to the level of a dilated Totality embracing, without remainder, all that is conceivable. That does not prevent this Totality from being thought under the mode of an active instance reflecting upon itself and operating with a view toward ends it sets for itself—this being both the definition of the subject and that of Hegelian Reason.[24]

Social-historical being is therefore posited by reference to the "life" of this enlarged subject that is the "historical people" and ultimately by reference to the Absolute Subject, Reason, or World Spirit. Its manifestations are seen as the articulations of a teleology, as a hierarchy subject to well-ordering. This hierarchy is, and has to be, at least two-sided: hierarchy of moments of the life of a people, in which economy, law, religion, art have a well-defined place; and hierarchy of these peoples themselves, which imposes a well-orderedness upon the longitudinal history of each human activity. Christianity, for example, must necessarily be superior to Buddhism, modern philosophy necessarily superior to Greek philosophy—and, as everyone knows, the Prussian monarchy the perfect form of the State. In this domain, as in all others—I cannot show this here—and contrary to what one constantly hears repeated, Aristotelian logic, in its true power, its profound *dunamis*, is not only completely maintained by Hegel, it is *completed* and fully actualized. By means of and through this completion, Hegel also eliminated (or exiled from explicit thought, at best reduced to the status of accident, illusion, and error) what Aristotle, in his highest moments (the *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*), maintained: the aporetic, and the recognition of an ultimate division, of the limits of logos, of the inaccessibility of a divine point of view. This too must be left aside here.

Elsewhere[25] I have tried to show that in his turn Marx, in his *theory* of history and whatever the upheavals he attempted to and did carry out within the Hegelian framework, remained inside this framework. Things proceeded somewhat differently when Marx *wrote* economic or political history. After a century of Marxist and Marxological literature, however, the theorization of these historical analyses remains entirely to be done; were it done, it would yield a theory of the interpreter,

not of Marx, and, as we shall see, would meet head on the explicit conception of history he formulated, from *The German Ideology* until the end of his work.

Marx's deep-seated dependence on the key Hegelian schemata is clearly apparent when one considers his general view of universal history, and it is already evident in his first position on a universal history, in the strong sense, where everything communicates and concurs with everything else. This position he received from Hegel without thinking that it posed a problem, even though Hegel gave it a philosophical "foundation" that, for Marx, is illusory. Within this history, the figure of the universal "mode of production" and of the classes corresponding to it plays the role of the "historical people," and the necessary stages in humanity's development that of the moments of realization of the Idea. The doubly hierarchical network Hegel imposes upon the succession of peoples and upon the order borne by the "moments of their life" Marx retained in its entirety. And just as Hegel sees in the forms of life of European societies of his time the fully developed "necessary moments" of what was always there but not yet deployed, Marx retrospectively projected these forms onto the whole of past history, going so far as to affirm that their fundamental reciprocal relations were identical to what they have now become, even when these forms had not yet been realized in separation. Of course, he inverted the algebraic signs, replaced Spirit by matter or nature, and prided himself on having placed the Hegelian dialectic back on its feet. Nevertheless, none of all these alterations affects the logic at work here. The distinction between spirit and matter is strictly meaningless if both are conceived as sets of perfectly assignable rational determinations (which is the case with the Hegelian spirit, as well as with nature in the Marxian sense). As one learns in mathematics, structures imposed on the same set by two opposite order relations are isomorphic; in other words, the determination of the superstructure by the infrastructure or the inverse boils down to the same thing.

The inherited logical and ontological schemata remain sovereignly operative in the organization of the "newest" concepts Marx placed at the center of his theory. Thus, "concrete labor" was to take the place of "abstract spiritual labor," as one of his formulations apparently most opposed to Hegelianism states. But how does Marx *actually* think labor? As a finalized operation of a subject on a thing according to concepts—or as system of finalized operations of a *universitas subjectorum* on a *universitas rerum* according to a *systema idearum*.

> What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labor-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will.[26]

Dozens of ardent and subtle young Marxists have cited this passage to show that Marx was not simply a materialist. Indeed, he was just as much a rationalist. The question of the *origin* of what, as representation of the result, "already existed in the imagination of the laborer," cannot and must not be raised. Were it to be so, it could receive only one response. (Recourse to "reflection" here would be absurd: one

would really like to know of what a tank, a piano, and a computer are "reflections.") The response is the following: the prior idea of the result is the product of a rational elaboration carried out by men (within limits each time imposed upon them, these limits being essentially those of their knowledge) who aim at giving themselves the means most appropriate to their ends. As for these ends, inasmuch as they go beyond technique and command, there are those that men represent to themselves, but also and above all those to which these first ones are subordinated, the immanent ends of the historical process. The realization of these ends occurs through the development of the "forces of production." The "mode of production" has to, each time, be nearly optimal with regard to existing conditions; when it ceases to be so, it is, sooner or later, overturned and replaced by another, more appropriate mode (prepared already in and through the preceding one). Appropriate to what? To the development of the capacity to produce. Social-historical systems, the "modes of production," grow in being and attain reality to the extent that the quantity of things they can produce increases (and as, correlatively, the faculties "slumbering" in man, seen from the start as producer, develop). This growth defines the finality, the norm of optimalization that is, purely and simply, maximization.

Here Marx is wholly in the grip of the central imaginary significations of capitalism. These significations, however, are not pure (no more than they are for the capitalist ideology itself). This maximization, this ontological progress of society measurable in terms of potential social product, goes hand in hand with the enslavement of the subject it presupposes and engenders, this subject itself becoming a thing lost in the foreign and hostile ocean of things it does not cease to "produce." Nevertheless, that is only a moment, though certainly a very long one, in a Calvary of Reason: there is a *ratio abscondita* of this "negative" development that will finally make it engender its contrary, "positive" moment. It is here that we rediscover the Judeo-Hegelian thread. This final contrary, however, is not Judeo-Hegelian: it is Greek. The ultimate finality or goal orienting the whole of historical development is a *good life* (*eu zen*) in *this* world, which presupposes a man liberated from production and from labor—which are, Aristotle would say, *banausoi* (vulgar-servile), and which remain, Marx says, the realm of necessity (which can be reduced, but not eliminated or altered in character: no *productive* labor can be noble). Since power looms can now weave by themselves, there is no longer a need for slaves—but as long as these looms require supervision, supervision will remain the tribute of banausic and unfree activity liberty will have to pay to necessity. Something, nevertheless, remains of the Promise; and Reason, in the end and at the end of its cunning, is Providence: the ultimate reign of freedom is guaranteed for us by historical necessity—unless, of course, everything should collapse into barbarism.

To this view of history is opposed, obviously, Marx's other great theme: "The history of humanity is the history of class struggle."[27] Presented as a universally true thesis covering all aspects of social-historical making/doing, the idea certainly has only a partial and relative validity. Nevertheless, in propounding this theme Marx began to open a new path for thinking a social-historical entity. He did not, however, follow this path to its end, drawn backward as he was by the ontology he had inherited that dominated his thought.

Let us begin by recalling[28] that the two conceptions—"historical materialism" and "class struggle"—are profoundly incompatible; that as soon as one is taken seriously, it empties the other of its content; and that it is the first that ultimately remains at the foundations of Marx's theoretical work. A class is only a product of the "mode of production" (itself a product of technical development); it does not truly act, it is acted upon. At best, it reacts to what is there, and it reacts necessarily with illusion and blindness. To work out the theory of the capitalist economy is to discover the objective laws of the system, which function on the condition that "those involved are unaware of what is going on." It is these laws that come to the fore and form the main research theme, not the struggle between capitalists and proletarians. There is an "objective" definition of class. It is given by reference to the organization of the relations of production in the society under consideration, and it is entirely independent of all *activity* on this class's part (except when such activity is implied by the class's position in the relations of production, which is not necessary: feudal lords provide one example). Thus, there is a relation of equivalence among individuals that issues from the equivalence of their situation in the relations of production, which themselves are "independent of their will"[29]—not of their *individual* will but of their *class* will, since these relations are determined by the state of development of the forces of production. Not only is it unnecessary to make any reference to the modes of activity of these individuals other than their productive mode in order to grasp their class position; these modes are all, de jure, strictly deducible from this position (family, mores, political organization, the ideology of the bourgeoisie—each is determined by its place in the relations of production).

At the same time, however, classes, or more precisely *certain* classes with a "historical role," such as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat,[30] are viewed essentially in terms of the activities through which they transform the situation they encounter as they arrive on the historical scene. Certainly the two are related; and, in a canonical version, class activity must even be subordinated rigorously and completely to class situation (as innumerable passages from Marx, beginning with the one from *The Holy Family* cited earlier, say). That does not suffice, however, and Marx's historical analyses oblige one to go further. The bourgeoisie, for example, which Marx had presented in so many lapidary formulas as merely the passive result of a stage in overall technical development, in fact enjoys, in Marx's concrete descriptions, a historical existence only to the extent that it takes on responsibility for this development with a veritable frenzy, tirelessly pursues its realization while broadening its scope, subordinates all else to this end, and destroys every obstacle standing in its way until "all that is holy is profaned," so that this "passive" class explodes with activity and never ceases until everything has been quantified, reified, calculated, rationalized (for Marx, there is no need for quotation marks here), the Earth exploited, and all aspects of people's lives subjected to the requirements of capital accumulation. One cannot fail, then, to recognize that the bourgeoisie itself actively creates, at least in part, the relations of production that will determine it as bourgeoisie. Returning to the object itself, we notice that the "birth" of the bourgeoisie, the formation of the first nuclei of artisans and traders, does not correspond to any important identifiable [*repérable*] technological change, but to a redeployment of the social division of work as compared with the properly feudal phase of history, to

a separation and to a development of functions hitherto resorbed within the feudal domain or atrophied due to its mere existence. In short, we notice that the institution of the "burg" or "borough" has conditioned a new acceleration of technological evolution, rather than the other way around. Returning now to Marx, one can verify that nothing he says on the birth of the bourgeoisie, when he speaks of it in concrete terms, refers to technological changes, but to what "serfs who have escaped from the feudal domain"[31] do and to the way in which they organize themselves. Rereading his description of another decisive moment in the history of the bourgeoisie, that of "primitive accumulation," we notice that the essential condition for the passage to capitalism—the "emancipation"[32] of a large quantity of labor power that is thereby made available for employment in industry, this "forcible creation of outlawed proletarians"[33]—results essentially from a process that is external to technical development, external even to the bourgeoisie proper, for it "creates, directly, none but great landed proprietors."[34] We note, too, that "the bourgeoisie, at its rise, wants and uses the power of the State to 'regulate' wages"[35] (such constant state intervention thus becomes the tool of a not-yet-ruling class); and, finally, that the bourgeoisie, when it "employs the power of the State, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, hothouse fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition,"[36] is a social-historical agent whose action far exceeds the boundaries traced by its previously acquired position within the relations of production (which should have confined it to accumulation at a "snail's pace")[37] and works for the advent of new productive relations, whose realization will finally make it a true capitalist bourgeoisie (though that does not prevent Marx from repeating, in this same Part VIII of the first volume of *Capital*, from which the preceding citations are drawn, the passage from the *Communist Manifesto* that makes of the bourgeoisie the "involuntary promoter" of the "advance of industry").[38]

This description of primitive accumulation therefore says *too much* and *too little* in relation to any theory that would claim to reduce the birth of capitalism to the gathering together of a canonical set of necessary and sufficient conditions *intrinsic* to the state of the productive forces. Too little, for the creation of an outlawed proletariat—the necessary condition for the passage to industrial capitalism—results from a process that is external to the bourgeois mode of production at the time: in relation to the "immanent" logic of that mode of production, it is "extrinsic" and accidental. It follows that the historical efficacy of this mode, and a fortiori of the corresponding class, is limited by the necessary contribution of another social-historical factor heterogeneous to it. But also and especially too much, for the mere existence of a bourgeoisie (which could have continued the process of accumulation at a "snail's pace") does not suffice. This social category of the population must adopt actual forms of behavior and devote itself to forms of activity that go far beyond those its position within the already existing relations of production would impose upon it, and that are motivated by the "aim" of realizing a state of these relations hitherto unknown and unimaginable.

Now, it is by means of this "too much," this extra, that the bourgeoisie ultimately *makes itself* into the bourgeoisie in the full sense of the word. It is by going beyond the role that is strictly homologous to its already acquired situation that it raises it-

self to the height of its "historical role." It develops itself, and develops the forces of production, insofar as it is genuinely *possessed* by the "idea" of their unlimited development, an "idea" (or, in my terminology, an imaginary signification) that quite evidently is neither a perception of anything real nor a rational deduction. What Monsieur Jourdain speaks without knowing it is not the translation into prose of a set of significations already inscribed in the "infrastructure"; or rather, as long as he speaks only that, he will remain Monsieur Jourdain.[39] He will become a capitalist when he starts to speak the language of a cruel epic poem, of a monstrous cosmogony in which the unlimited expansion of this "infrastructure" for its own sake will become, for the first time in history, intellectually conceivable, psychically cathected, ideologically valued, sociologically possible, and historically real.

Marx's descriptions therefore do not present the activity of the bourgeoisie as completely determined by the state of the forces of production *such as it is*, but as incompletely determinant of this state *such as it will be* by means of this very activity. The bourgeoisie *makes itself* as the bourgeoisie inasmuch as its *making/doing* transforms the social-historical situation in which it is placed at the outset, including not only the relations of production and the forces of production but the *mode of social existence* of these productive forces, the *mode of historical temporality* consubstantial with their continuous upheaval, and up to and including their very *definition*. This making/doing can be grasped in its unity only by reference to this "aim," to this "idea," to this imaginary signification of the unlimited development of the forces of production. (That this imaginary signification is largely nonconscious and, inasmuch as it is conscious, remains shrouded in an ideology that presents this development as the means for attaining other ends, happiness and the *good life* of humanity, obviously changes nothing.) This making/doing is certainly rooted in the actual preexisting situation of the bourgeoisie, but it would produce nothing other than repetition if it did not go beyond this situation. At the very most it would have brought about slow modifications, not the historic upheavals that led to capitalism. This can be seen in a variety of cases where the bourgeoisie does not live up to its "historical role" for a short time, for a long time, or forever.[40]

What remains is to gauge the weight of the metaphor of the "historical role," which is obviously not neutral. Is it, then, that there is a play in which such a role is assigned to this social stratum? And who is its author? Or are we watching, rather, a performance of the commedia dell'arte—but, under what tradition have the characters and the plot been established? Or, this evening, is one truly improvising, without text, without plots, without characters defined in advance? The head-on opposition between two irreconcilable conceptions, evoked earlier, here becomes fully manifest. Either this "historical role" is just a manner of speaking, an empty tautology signifying simply that the world as it appears to the observer after the fact would not be what it is had not previous events been what they were and had not the different social strata done what they had done, or—and this is obviously what Marx had in mind—the expression has a nontrivial meaning, for it posits that historical development occurs in line with an order whose signification the speaker possesses, that events and activities of social strata all have a function to carry out in the accomplishment of a result or an end that transcends them but that, in principle, is given

from the very start; and in this case, both the image (which, moreover, no longer is one) and the metaphysics underlying it are unacceptable.

If we take a closer look, however, we will see the necessary character of the antinomy, *and* of the movement by which Marx settles it in favor of one of its terms. The social-historical being of the bourgeoisie really appears to him, in part, for what it is: a social stratum reacting to its situation in a way that exceeds the given and defining itself essentially by the transformative activity it undertakes. From the "free towns" to Manchester; from the clock to the steam engine; from the Flemish kermess to Victorian morals; from the corporatist monopoly to the religion of liberalism; from the Reformation to free thinking; from the invocation of Antiquity to the alleged tabula rasa of the seventeenth century and from there to a new invocation of Antiquity; through, despite, and beyond the variety and the opposition of the conditions in which the bourgeoisie finds itself and of the expressions it has given to its activity—its actions, its behavior, the types and forms of organization, its values, its ideas, but especially the *effects* of its making/doing, throughout several centuries and spread over a great number of countries, ultimately go to make up *a single* social-historical figure. Such a being, and such a unity have, however, strictly no status within the frameworks of thought with which Marx was familiar and to which he belonged. These are less than clouds; they are accumulations of incoherencies and absurd challenges to conceptualization, however "dialectical" one wishes to be. The identity of the individuals who make up this being obviously cannot confer on it its unity. Nor could the similarity of the "objective conditions" in which these individuals find themselves placed provide it, since these conditions vary considerably in time and in space. Actual production relations offer hardly any more room for establishing this unity, since one cannot liken in this regard thirteenth-century artisans and merchants to sixteenth-century big bankers and to nineteenth-century factory owners. And this shows that one cannot speak of this unity as unity of a *form*, either. If it exists, it can be conceived only on the basis of the similarity of the *results* of this activity—provided, of course, that one does not see in them "material" results (which are again indefinitely variable), but looks in them for similar *significations*. These results reveal in the bourgeoisie a class that tends to unify the world on a "bourgeois basis," that is to say, one that mercilessly eliminates all previous forms of social existence in order to create an organization ruled by a single imperative: the unlimited development of the forces of production. In other words, the bourgeoisie's unity is conferred upon it by the unity of its making/doing, itself defined by the unity of the historical aim it succeeds in realizing. But what can that really signify, what is this unity of an aim that would be shared by artisans in Catalonia, Hanseatic corsairs, the Fugger family, the Manchester cotton manufacturers, and Restoration-era bankers? How is one to define the content of this aim, which is nothing other than this indefinable X that is the perpetual capitalist transformation of the world? Above all, what is an aim without a subject of the aim if not, at worst, an absurdity and, at best, a prosopopoeia, an abuse of language? We are out and out confabulating, the solid ground of thought gives way beneath our feet, and we must find it again at all costs.

The being of the bourgeoisie must be given ontological and conceptual consistency, and that entails performing a certain number of operations that boil down,

as always, to reducing it to categories of objects, types of being already known and explored elsewhere. The object under consideration cannot remain something singular, nor can it be defined as mere sum of specific differences; a *genus proximum* to which it belongs is required. One must therefore construct a class of objects, a concept of which the bourgeoisie will be one of the instances, and these instances must be able to be identified with each other, and identified *tout court* according to their essential characteristics. The bourgeois, feudal lords, Roman patricians, and Chinese mandarins must in essence be analogous and comparable to each other, they must be thinkable in terms of the concept of class as such and by means of what is essential to it.[41] This essence must, in its turn, be able to be thought by reference to other assignable essences or collections and unions of them and, finally, by reduction to first essences: things and subjects (ideas do not count here, since Marx has decided that, for better or worse, they only repeat the real—as Plato had decided that the real only repeats, worse rather than better, the ideas). Thus, class is defined by reference to the relations of production, which are, in the last analysis, "relations between persons mediated by things." The structure of the ontological relation, essence/manifestation, guarantees that the knowledge of the essence will allow one to know the manifestations, the essence producing essentially only the manifestations proper to it, the not essentially determined manifestations being, conversely and by definition, accidental. To say that the manifestations are determined by the essence evidently signifies that the phenomena obey laws; therefore, since the same causes produce the same effects by virtue of the principle of identity, we know in principle, and taking into account the few imperfections in our information and in our analytical capacities, "what is, what will be, and what already has been."[42] If Zeus has been shown up by the lightning rod, and Hermes by the Crédit Mobilier, why would not Calchas be shown up by our knowledge? The "being" of the class "historically compels" it to do what it has to do; knowing this "being," we know the action of classes in history, and we protect ourselves from real surprises as well as incomparably more serious philosophical surprises. What remains is to integrate this series of objects into the Whole (which is One, and inside of which each object has its place and its function): this will be the role of the "historical role," the function of the "function of the class." This object thereby receives its ultimate dignity; its existence is well moored on both sides to the totality of existents: it has its necessary and sufficient causes in what has already been, its final cause in what is to be; it harmonizes with the logic ruling over the effects of things as well as with the one governing the acts of subjects. Thus is a fine concept of class constructed—a fictive *constructum* that succeeds in the remarkable exploit of imputing to all other historical classes bourgeois characteristics they do not possess and of removing from the bourgeoisie what has made its being and its unity. Lukács considered it unfortunate for the workers' movement that Marx had not written the chapter on classes that was to close *Capital*; perhaps we should ask whether he could have written it.

We can truly grasp the being of the bourgeoisie only by reference to its *making/doing*, to its social-historical activity. The proper character of this activity is not to ensure the tranquil functioning of given and well-established relations of production, but to carry out, knowingly or not, willingly or not, an unprecedented historical

transformation that began several centuries ago and still is not finished. The being of the bourgeoisie can be apprehended only by reference to *what arises* through its making/doing. Now, *that which* arises in and through this making/doing and its relation to *that "in and through which"* it comes about must finally be seen by us, in their *proper being*, as absolutely original, unprecedented, and irreducible "object" and "relation" having no analogy or model elsewhere and "belonging" to no "type" of object or relation that has already been given or could be constructed. Rather, they give rise to a "type" of which they are the unique exemplars, and not subject [*ne soumettant pas*] (save formally and in empty fashion) to the determinations of the universal and the singular. They make appear their own conditions of intelligibility and do not receive these from something else. Indeed, there is here neither an "end" intended and willed by one or several subjects (though the partial moment of the end constantly intervenes in the conscious activities involved), nor any definite "result" of a set of assignable causes (though "causations" and "motivations" are almost always present), nor "dialectical" production of a totality of significations (though significations continually emerge at all levels and refer back and forth among themselves).

What arises through the making/doing of the bourgeoisie is a new social-historical world in the process of becoming. This world, this becoming, and the very mode of this becoming are a creation of the bourgeoisie through which it creates itself as the bourgeoisie. It is what now presents itself to us as the contemporary bureaucratic-capitalist world, with all the threads from the past leading into it and tangled together in it (others having broken off along the way) and with all the still-"unreal" threads proceeding from it, some already identifiable [*repérables*], others not, which will be woven into a future that will thereby modify them and will add to them others, at the same time that this future will retroactively modify the reality of the allegedly "already given" past, that is, its meaning. We relate this making/doing, certainly, to groups of people placed each time in similar situations, and in particular to a social stratum, or more exactly to a *sequence* of social strata. Nevertheless, these situations, or the "objective characteristics" corresponding to them, are here only *marking terms* [*termes de repérage*] that are not unified in a concept. To make of these characteristics, which permit one to *mark out* [*repérer*] the sequence of social strata of which we spoke, a concept (the comprehension of which would be composed of these characteristics), one would have to maintain that they confer on the bourgeoisie its unity (or if one prefers, that they express it). Now, that is false; no amount of juggling with the "relations of production" could allow one to think that the characteristics of the situation of thirteenth-century artisans and merchants, eighteenth-century manufacturers, and twentieth-century managers of multinational firms can be unified under the aegis of this term. The strata we have just mentioned are certainly marked by characteristics relating to production (or to the economy). Yet that does not yield an identity (or similarity) of situation *within* the relations of production, but only a similarity as to the *relationship* all these strata have *with* production. To mark out soldiers by their grade presupposes simply that they all have a relationship with the army, not that they have the *same* position within the army. Now, as for this relationship to production (and to the economy), it is the bourgeoisie itself that creates it. The successive social strata whose mak-

ing/doing ultimately engenders the capitalist world can be marked by reference to production, but that is just a part, as it turns out, of what the bourgeoisie contributes to the world. I cannot mark out Hindu castes, the "classes" of antiquity, and feudal "estates" by referring to their situation in the relations of production (a citizen of Athens or of Rome is not necessarily, and not generally, a slave owner); I need religious, juridico-political, and other reference marks [*repères*]. Ever since the birth of the bourgeoisie, however, the reference mark provided by one's position within the relations of production indeed becomes pertinent, and ultimately relegates all others to a secondary level. This brings us to the essential point: to define a concept of class valid for all social-historical formations by making reference to the relations of production is equivalent to positing that the *type of relationship* the other "classes" in history maintain with these relations is essentially identical to the one the bourgeoisie maintains—which is outrageously false, since *the bourgeoisie is the "class" through which the relationship to production arises in history as the fundamental relationship*, it is the "class" whose business is production ("the business of the United States is business"), the "class" that defines itself as essentially concerned with and concentrated around production. That was assuredly not the case with feudal lords, the citizens of antiquity, or Asiatic despots and their "bureaucracy." In this view, people's acts and their relations—therefore, social reality; therefore, reality *tout court*, save for an infinitely remote point—are to be defined by reference to production. Among the consequences is that Marx, who was himself immersed in bourgeois society, was able to see the whole of past history only from this point of view, namely, that production is the central and determining business of society. It would be vain to reintroduce here, as Marx actually did, the well-known Hegelian motif, saying that this relation to production has always been fundamental, the bourgeoisie's only innovation being that it made this relation explicit. The proper—and, in Marx's view, the "privileged"—character of the capitalist era is precisely the unprecedented development of the forces of production *and* the destruction of every other interest, measure, and value in social life—which is effectively impossible without a radical transformation of the relationship of the "class" under consideration (and of all the others) to production and to other spheres of social life, a transformation that reduces the Law of the Prophets to "Accumulate, Accumulate." Even if we were to grant that the domination of other classes in history has been the imposed result of a *state* of the forces of production (which is false), clearly the bourgeoisie has imposed its rule *by imposing the development* of these forces upon all society. Let us add that nothing in the initial "objective" situation *obliges* the bourgeoisie to do *that*.[43]

It boils down to the same thing to say that the *making/doing* and *self-making* [*se faire*] of the bourgeoisie can be grasped only by reference to the imaginary significations that inhabit it, that it embodies and "realizes," and that are legible on it. In this sense, the higher civil servants of the absolute monarchy or even some monarchs themselves, noblemen, and landed proprietors, religious reformers, ideologues, and scientists can "belong" and have "belonged" to the bourgeoisie as much as, and often much more than, entire masses of shopkeepers and small-scale employers. The bourgeois social-historical transformation is *possible* in its own right and *comprehensible* on our part only in relation to the magma of social imaginary significations that the

bourgeoisie engenders and that make of it the bourgeoisie. Indeed, it boils down to this, that over a whole geographical area and during an entire period, the making/doing of people renders possible things that were until then (socially) impossible and logics of things previously absurd and incomprehensible. This making/doing becomes instrumented in new means oriented toward ends that were devoid of meaning according to the previously granted criteria; it invents new social articulations through which it organizes itself, as well as myths and explicit ideas by which to orient, reflect upon, and justify itself. Now, this making/doing is not what it is as some sort of displacement of molecules in an allegedly absolute physical universe; it is what it is by means of all that it "is" not, its unlimited and, in part, indefinable relationships with objects, but also with the acts of other individuals, and, even more, with the collective and anonymous activity in which it is constantly immersed; with the explicit ends it offers itself; but also and above all, with the interminable chain of its effects, which it never masters; with what, in the given social context, makes it logical or absurd, effective or vain, laudable or criminal. It is what it is by means of all the *referrals* to what it is not: it is what it is through its *signification.* Marx said that, in itself, a machine is no more capital than gold is, in itself, money. A machine is capital only through its insertion in a network of *capitalist* economic and social relationships. That is the capital-signification of the machine, which it can lose (or acquire) as a function of facts unrelated to its physical or technical mechanical properties. Likewise, a gesture, or series of gestures, is never in itself labor. These significations form neither a "set," nor a "hierarchy"; they do not obey the usual logical relations ("belonging to" or "inclusion in," relations of order, etc.); the sole relation they always bear is the simple transitive relation, the *referral.* It is for this reason, and because they cannot be treated as "distinct and definite elements," that I call them a *magma.* This already indicates that what is at issue are not rational significations (in which case, they would have to be able to be constructed by means of logical operations, and bear relations in which it could be a matter of the true and nontrue, which makes no sense: the serf-lord relation is what it is, it can be neither "founded" nor "refuted"). Neither is it a matter of significations "of the real," of abstract representations of what is, since it is through these significations that what is is represented as it is represented, and ultimately, even, it is through them that any thing whatsoever *is* socially.

Finally, it boils down to saying that the bourgeoisie's making/doing engenders a new definition of *reality,* of what *counts* and of what *does not count*—therefore, of what *does not exist* (or nearly so: what can be counted and what cannot enter into accounting books)—or, to use the fine English expression, of what *matters* and what does not. This new definition is not inscribed in books but in the actions of men, their relations, their organization, their perception of what is, their striving toward what is of value—and of course, also in the very materiality of the objects they produce, use, consume. This making/doing is therefore the *institution* of a new reality, of a new world, and of a new mode of social-historical existence. It is this institution—itself unfolding over several centuries, and still unfinished—that underlies and unifies the innumerable host of second-order institutions, of institutions in the ordinary sense of the term, those in and through which it instruments itself: from the capitalist enterprise to the army of [French Revolutionary General] Lazare Carnot,

from the "rule of law" to Western science, from the educational system to museum art, from the judge as *Paragraphen-automat* to Taylorism. It is only by reference to this institution that the mode of its institutionalization as well as the content of its instituted significations and the concrete organization of the particular institutions of the capitalist era allow themselves to be grasped in their historical specificity.

This institution is *creation*. No causal analysis could "predict" it on the basis of the state preceding it, no series of logical operations could produce it conceptually. Obviously, it emerges in a given situation among the creations of the still living past; it takes over [*reprend*] an innumerable quantity of them and remains for a long time subject to certain among them. Nevertheless, to the extent that the institutive *making/doing* of the bourgeoisie progresses, the meaning of that which had been conserved from the past is transformed, gradually or by fits and starts, either in a "catastrophic" way (as in Christianity with the Reformation) or imperceptibly, by insertion into a new network of relations and into a new reality. The most striking example of the latter case is the fate of "reason," which became "rationality," which in its turn became "rationalization"[44] through a movement in which Leibniz plays a part as much as Arkwright, and Georg Cantor as much as Henry Ford. *Cum homo calculat, fit I.B.M.* Its destiny will be understood only when the "rationality" of modern times is reflected upon in conjunction with the central imaginary signification the bourgeoisie, in and through its making/doing, contributes to and imposes upon the world: the unlimited development of forces of production. Now, *this* signification is absolutely new: people who have amassed wealth and hoarded treasure certainly have existed since times immemorial, and we know that Aristotle was familiar with unlimited *chrematistics*, acquisition for acquisition's sake, which he criticized as a corruption of economics. We are equally aware, however, that with the bourgeoisie it is not a matter of unlimited acquisition in general, but acquisition that should and *can* be pursued not as appropriation of a greater and greater part of a constant total but as regular development and expansion. We know, too, that this is impossible without the continual transformation of the already existing forces of production and of their mode of making value, that this new form of acquisition recognizes no external social limit, that it cannot remain the particular activity of some person or persons but has to become the transformation and revolutionizing of all spheres of social life through their submission to the "logic" of the unlimited expansion of production – and, of course, the continual transformation and revolutionizing of the tools, objects, and organization of production itself. All that neither recapitulates, nor generalizes, nor merely gives particular form to prior historical situations, any more than it allows itself to be deduced or "produced" on the basis of these situations, any more than it could be foretold or imagined by some bygone poet or philosopher.

The making/doing of the bourgeoisie is imaginary creation made visible as institution of capitalism.

We therefore learn *nothing* about this historical object that is the bourgeoisie by subsuming it under a universal, the alleged concept of "class." Such a subsumption is either formal and empty (the "concept" being only a union of marking terms) or else fallacious (through its identification of nonidentifiable objects). It is all the more fallacious as the Marxian concept of class is nothing other than an abstraction of

certain aspects of a reality the bourgeoisie itself has created historically for the first time. To think the bourgeoisie as "class" in Marx's sense is either to think nothing at all or to find in it, disguised as universal, what already (and somewhat badly) had been extracted from this object. In fact, it corresponds to the *singularities* of that object.

All the foregoing has been only preparatory. Let us consider now our real question: What is the working class, the workers' movement, its history? What is the relationship between the Luddites, the Canuts,[45] the workers of Poznan and Budapest in 1956, the form of the general strike, the trade-union institution, the FAI,[46] the Wobblies, Marx, Bakunin, wildcat strikes? What, for centuries – since the popular movements in Italian and Flemish towns at the onset of the Renaissance – *makes itself* as working class and as workers' movement? In what sense can one speak, in a manner other than descriptive and nominal, of *a* working class, of *a* workers' movement?

Two essential considerations make the theoretical situation with which we are faced even more complex.

First, *for us* the working class (like, moreover, though in a different fashion, capitalism or the bureaucracy today) is not simply a "historical object," like Rome, the empire of the Incas, or Romantic music. The question of the working class and of the workers' movement coincides (in any case, has long coincided) largely with the question of the crisis of the society in which we live and of the struggle unfolding therein, with the question of its transformation – in short, with the contemporary political question. Our problem is therefore not simply the epistemological or philosophical problem concerning the unity and mode of being of this "object." We absolutely cannot separate the question What is the proletariat? from the question What is politics today?, for the latter is, for us, thinkable only within the perspective of a radical transformation of society, and, historically speaking, the project of such a transformation has been sifted out, articulated, and formulated in and through the history of the workers' movement.

The second consideration is that this connection, as one knows, has been made precisely by Marxism, and in a quite specific sense. Marxism not only claims to have the answer to the questions What is a class? and What is the proletariat?, but also assigns to the latter the historical mission of transforming society, thus settling the question of politics in general. Politics henceforth would be the activity that prepares and realizes the proletariat's accession to power and, thereby, the construction of a communist society. In other terms: (revolutionary) politics today is what expresses and serves the immediate and historical interests of the proletariat. Now, Marxism itself has exercised considerable influence over the workers' movement – and has in turn been influenced by it to a no less considerable degree. In certain countries and for significant time periods, the two have almost coincided, yet no one could say for a single instant that they are identical. It is impossible to speak of them as if they were one and the same thing. Impossible, too, to speak of one without speaking of the other. One can neither ignore the Marxist conception of the proletariat nor accept its claim to be the self-conception *of* the proletariat. Yet one cannot completely reject this claim, either, since in a sense and in part it has, at times, actually been so.

Faced with such a tangled situation, in which the one who speaks is also necessarily and multiply implicated, [we must admit that] there is no point of view assuring dominance over the field (if such a point of view ever existed anywhere), no mode of exposition that clearly stands out as the best. It seems preferable to begin with the points most familiar to the reader.

In Marx's view, the proletariat is a class whose status is "objectively" defined by reference to the capitalist relations of production—a class "in itself," as Trotsky will later say. It is at the same time a class defined by its historical "role," "function," or "mission": the abolition of class society and the construction of a communist society; a class that therefore will become a class "for itself" by abolishing itself in the same stroke as class. But what is the connection between these two terms, and how is the passage from one to the other to take place—since it is also quite obvious that neither in 1847 nor in 1973[47] is the proletariat a "class for itself"? If there has to be such a passage, clearly that passage will be the true meaning of the history of the proletariat, of the history of the workers' movement.

But how do we know that such a passage *has* to take place, or even that the proletariat effectively contains this possibility? In other words, what does the Marxist conception tell us about the *history* of the workers' movement? It is striking to note that beyond this a priori possession of its meaning, we can say *nothing* about it. (I am obviously not speaking here of the description and analysis of events.) The "objective status" of the proletariat is that of an exploited and oppressed class; as such, it can struggle—indeed, struggle effectively—against its exploitation and its oppression. (Let us note that it was in no way a priori necessary that this struggle take on the dimensions, the potency, and the contents it has acquired; an exploited class can remain at the stage of transitory and impotent revolts, invent a new religion, etc.) But why must this struggle necessarily be transformed from "immediate" struggle into "historical" struggle? Why must it go beyond the framework of existing society and lead to the construction of a new society—and *what* new society? In short: Why is the proletariat, by its situation, or why must it become, a revolutionary class, and what kind of revolution are we talking about?

It would be useless to search for an answer to these questions in an "objective" dynamics (or rather mechanics) of the contradictions and collapse of capitalism. Aside from the fact that such dynamics are a pure fantasy [*rêve*], it must be said that nothing guarantees in advance that capitalism's "collapse" would be followed automatically by the appearance of a classless society. (It could very well engender "the common ruin of the contending classes," to borrow Marx's phrase.)[48] Its appearance is inconceivable without the mediation of people's action, here therefore the proletariat, and we are brought back to the preceding question.

It would be equally vain to invoke the effects of the process of capital accumulation, through which "grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation," as well as "the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself."[49] Discipline, unity, and organization with a view toward what? With what objectives that would go beyond the struggle against misery and exploitation? An expropriation of the capitalists leading to what kind of organization of production and of society?

That even within Marxism these questions are neither trivial nor resolved is demonstrated by the well-known fact that such Marxists as Kautsky and Lenin themselves gave "negative" responses to them: considering its "objective" situation, the proletariat, both affirmed, is *not* a revolutionary class, it is merely reformist ("trade-unionist"). Revolutionary consciousness is introduced into the proletariat "from the outside" by socialist ideologists who, as such, come from the bourgeoisie. Before hastening to condemn this position, one should look at what within Marxism is opposed to it and above all what *could* be opposed to it, and ask whether the position, as well as opposition to it, does not share the same hypotheses and does not move within the same universe of thought.

Indeed, it is hard to deny that on the surface the overwhelming majority of the *explicit* manifestations of proletarian struggle have been and remain "trade-unionist" and "reformist." For the few revolutions or great political mobilizations per century one can count tens of thousands of wage strikes each year. Moreover, whatever the content and character, workers' participation in unions (or in "reformist" parties) or their support for these has been and remains incomparably greater than their adherence to political organizations calling for socialist revolution. It has been objected to this that, in numerous cases, the working class has begun by creating political organizations, which then originated trade unions. This argument holds no water for us if we agree that, once created, these unions, as well as the accompanying demands, have in most cases absorbed most of the working class's attention: the Leninist thesis does not concern chronology but the *essential content* of the working class's "spontaneous" tendencies. Indeed, this argument can easily be turned on its head. Whence come these parties and political militants? Have they been engendered by pure spontaneity on the workers' part? A consistent Leninist (little matter that Lenin might, as Trotsky claimed, have later abandoned the positions he formulated in *What Is to Be Done?*) would respond that the refutation would rather confirm what he is saying: on its own and "spontaneously," the working class can *at most* raise itself merely to the level of trade-union consciousness and activity; sometimes it cannot even do that, and the intervention of political organizations and activists is required for it to proceed even that far. These organizations and militants are assuredly *political* (whatever their "empirical" social origin may be, and even if they are fully "working class"), inasmuch as they define themselves explicitly by reference to a permanent organization and a permanent activity, a striving for power, a program of socioeconomic transformation, an overall conception of society, an ideology. As such, they are and can be only the product of an era's culture—that is to say, of bourgeois culture. What purpose does it serve to invoke the role of political organization in the constitution of German trade unions when the creation of these organizations has been marked by the decisive influence of individuals such as Marx, Lassalle, and others lesser known, behind whom stand, as one knows, German idealism and English political economy (were one to add French utopian socialism, that would not make the works of Saint-Simon and Fourier any bit more the products of the proletariat)? In short: without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary politics—and it is not the proletariat *as such* that generates this theory.

And what does one oppose to this conception? In one of his last texts, Trotsky wrote, "Scientific socialism is the conscious expression . . . of the instinctive and

elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings."[50] A lovely phrase, which raises more problems than it solves. What is the meaning and the origin of this "instinctive and elemental drive" (the term "elemental" obviously does not connote "the simple," but Water, Fire, etc.)? Would the proletariat result from a genetic mutation of the species, which thereby provides it with new instincts and drives? Without quibbling over words, is it too much to ask upon what "scientific socialism" leans in order to affirm itself as the *scientifically* conscious expression of the instinctive and elemental drives of a social category? And if these drives emerge as response to its situation in capitalist society, why does the latter require or induce *this* response, which must ultimately lead to the "reconstruction of society on communist beginnings"? Finally, let us ask: By whom and upon what basis are these drives deciphered? By whom and upon what basis does one recognize the "instinctive" and the "elemental," of which *one's own method for deciphering* is the "conscious expression"?

Unable to demonstrate and to reproduce its own genesis on the basis of the situation and activity of the proletariat—which it quite obviously could not do—this conception remains on the same terrain as the Leninist one, and it manifests the same antinomy. In the Leninist conception, the "historical interests" of the proletariat could be neither understood nor formulated by the proletariat itself, but only by a theory of bourgeois origin. In the Trotskyist conception, the "conscious expression" of the "instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat" has not awaited the labor pains of the proletariat to come into the world armed head to foot. In both cases, the same monstrously ahistorical attitude is manifested: in a sense, during the entire capitalist era and throughout the working-class struggles that mark it, nothing really happens. Either the party, aided by objective circumstances, manages to inculcate in workers the socialist truths its science had allowed it to attain from the beginning, or "the instinctive and elemental drive" finally succeeds in raising itself up to the level of its "conscious expression," which had long ago outdistanced it. The same thing goes for Rosa [Luxemburg]. One can certainly admire the feeling and spirit behind her statement that "[h]istorically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee."[51] One should even approve of its political-polemical intention. Nevertheless, one should also ask: What are these errors, what is this infallibility (with or without quotation marks, with or without irony)? If a scientific socialism exists, as Rosa always believed, there is no room for the "errors" of the masses (save as error itself). There can be only pedagogical tolerance: the child will learn better if allowed to find the solution on his own, at the cost of proceeding down the wrong path a few times, and yet, the path exists and the solution is known. One may speak of a process of trials and errors only if one knows that in relation to which there is trial and error.

The same thing goes for Marx: "Proletarian revolutions . . . criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses of their first attempts, . . . recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible,

and the conditions themselves cry out: *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*."[52] And yet these immense aims, before which proletarian revolutions recoil, have not made our thought recoil, for our thought already knows them and it regularly leaps over its theoretical Rhodes. "The goal is fixed for knowledge just as necessarily as the succession in the process," Hegel already said.[53] Under these conditions, the history of the proletariat can be, at best, only a *Bildungsroman*, the story of its years of apprenticeship. As to the content of this apprenticeship, it must, in a final paradox, be at the same time both absolutely definite (historical materialism predicts the mode of production that is to succeed the capitalist mode of production) and absolutely indefinite (one does not prepare recipes for the socialist kitchens of the future; contrary to the current mythology, the Bolsheviks came to power *without any program for social transformation*, they applied measures opposed to those they had earlier proposed, and they never acted except on a day-to-day basis; many Marxists, such as Rosa, severely criticized them on this score).

Neither of these two conceptions—and, more generally, no Marxist conception—has the wherewithal to think a *history* of the workers' movement. According to their own criteria of intelligibility, that history must remain unintelligible, and this is profoundly related to the political attitudes that correspond to these criteria. Thus, for example, in its vulgar empirical reality, the proletariat has for a century supported, most of the time, either reformist or bureaucratic-totalitarian (Stalinist) organizations and "leadership" groups [*directions*]. Whether one is a Leninist, a Trotskyist, or a Luxemburgist, what can one make of this fact, fundamental as it is in the play of forces acting within modern society? To speak, as is so often done, of "errors" and "betrayals" is simply ludicrous; on this scale, errors and betrayals cease to be errors and betrayals. Clearly, the reformist or Stalinist bureaucracies, in pursuing their policies, neither commit any "errors" nor "betray" anyone, but act in their own interests (and may "make mistakes" from *their* point of view—which is another matter entirely). Recognizing that, one can then advance a sociological interpretation of the working-class bureaucracy (an interpretation that does not even take us halfway): it is a stratum that has succeeded in creating privileges for itself (under capitalism or in the "workers' State"), privileges it henceforth defends, perhaps supported by a "working-class aristocracy." This interpretation, however, evidently concerns only the bureaucracy itself (and the "working-class aristocracy"), and the question remains in its entirety: Why then does the proletariat continue to support a policy that serves interests foreign to its own? The sole response forthcoming is a phrase about the "reformist illusions of the proletariat." Thus historical materialism becomes historical illusionism and the history of humanity the history of the illusions of the revolutionary class. Here we would have a class called upon to carry out the most radical upheaval ever, the passage from "prehistory" to genuine "history," the "conscious" construction, as Trotsky says, of socialism—but which, for more than a century, has fallen prey to tenacious illusions and manifested an astonishing capacity to believe in "leadership" groups that deceive them, that betray them, that in any case serve interests hostile to their own. And why would that change one day? The sole possible response in this context is this: because the collapse of capitalism will destroy the objective bases for reformist or other illusions of the proletariat. Here lies the inevitable source for the paranoia of today's "Marxists," who feel compelled

to predict every quarter year the "great crisis" brewing for the next quarter. And what are we to do in the meantime? Logic would dictate this response: Pretty much nothing. Logic, however, plays a small part in such matters. According to his own theoretical conceptions, Trotsky should have written in 1938: The crisis of humanity is the crisis of the revolutionary *class*. Faithful to his practice, he wrote, "The crisis of humanity is the crisis of its revolutionary *leadership*."[54] Trotsky's statement evinces the deep-seated duplicity of all Marxists in this regard: this revolutionary class, charged with superhuman tasks, is at the same time profoundly *irresponsible*: neither what happens to it nor even what it does can in any way be imputed to it; it is *innocent* in both senses of the term. The proletariat is the constitutional monarch of History. Responsibility falls instead on its ministers: on the old leadership, which committed errors and betrayed it—and on us, who are once again, against all odds, going to build the new leadership (it won't betray or commit errors, we give our word), and who take in charge history (and the innocent proletariat). And here lies the inevitable source for the bureaucratic substitutionism of these same "Marxists."

We cannot begin to understand anything about the proletariat and its history until we rid ourselves of the ontological schemata dominating inherited thought (and its latest offspring, Marxism), until we first consider the new significations that emerge in and through the activity of this social category, instead of forcing it into conceptual boxes fabricated elsewhere and already accepted in advance. We do not have to interpret the proletariat's activity by reference to an immanent finality, a "historic mission," for such a "mission" is an out-and-out myth. We ought, on the contrary, to become absorbed in a consideration of the proletariat's *actuality*—without forgetting what we otherwise know, but also without allowing ourselves to become obsessed by it, since here we have to learn *anew*. We should ask ourselves to what extent a tendency (or, indeed, several tendencies: we grant no privilege to the One, and this question, too, must remain open) emanates from the making/doing of the proletariat and what its signification is. Nor do we need to explain it by reducing it to the "objective conditions" in which the proletariat finds itself placed, to its situation within the relations of production (or within the overall social context). Not that these are to be neglected. Rather, we avoid such a reduction because these "conditions" are *almost nothing* outside the proletariat's own activity; they have neither determinate content nor determinate signification. In short, we cannot proceed in our *consideration* of the making/doing of the proletariat by way of its *elimination*, its reduction to assignable ends or established causes.

Yet, almost all the categories habitually used to grasp this making/doing thereby collapse. Thus it is with the ideas of "spontaneity" and its opposite, however this opposite may be interpreted. If "spontaneity" is opposed to "passivity," one transposes into one's present considerations the equivalent of the couple activity/passivity, which is merely a construction of the old philosophy of the subject, which was already of dubious validity in its original domain, and which, in any case, is *secondary*. The making/doing of a subject can be grasped neither as alternance nor as a combination of activity and passivity—and still less do these options apply to the making/doing of a social category. If "spontaneity" is opposed to "consciousness," the situation remains deeply analogous, since clearly one is making reference to the chimerical construction of a "subject" (doubly chimerical, since the "con-

sciousness" in question is that of an instituted collectivity, an organization or party) whose activity would be fully "conscious" or "rational."

We are thereby also forbidden to consider the relationship between the proletariat and "its" organizations under any of the traditional modes. These organizations are neither transparent expressions and pure instruments of the proletariat, as Lenin claimed them to be (in *"Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder*), nor foreign bodies that simply force the proletariat to submit to hostile influences. The proletariat is *implicated* in their existence, since it has in most cases played a role in their constitution and always in their survival (just as it is implicated in the existence of capitalist society, though certainly in another fashion, since it has never been the purely passive object of that society).

We are able to discern a few analogies to this relationship of implication in the history of other social strata. These analogies, however, are not of much help, for we will have seen nothing in modern history if we have not seen that in and through the making/doing of the proletariat are created both *original* institutions (such organizations as trade unions and parties, which, moreover, will be *imitated* by other strata, including the bourgeoisie itself) *and* an original relationship between a social category and "its" organizations—just as we also must see, in and through the making/doing of the proletariat, the creation of a *relationship*, unprecedented in history, between a social category and the "relations of production" in which this category is caught up.

Nor, finally, can we accept any separations between the "objective situation" of the proletariat, its "consciousness," and its "acts" and their subsequent recomposition under the aegis of causality/finality, any more than we can grant any importance in itself to the "proletarian" or "bourgeois" origin of ideas, and still less can we dream of the existence of a strict and univocal connection between the origin and character or the function of ideas. Ideas in history are not closed significations, each fully distinct from the others and well defined in themselves (supposing that such significations exist in any domain whatsoever); assigning them a precise origin sheds very little light on their content, inasmuch as they are still alive and are continually taken up again in social-historical making/doing, which thereby enriches them, impoverishes them, transforms them, and goes so far as to interpret them in diametrically opposed ways. If we are able to discern the social imaginary significations advanced by the bourgeoisie that correspond to the social-historical transformation it has brought about [*effectue*], this is precisely because these significations are not mere "ideas." Rather, they are coextensive with an effective social-historical process dating back several centuries and embracing the whole planet. The making/doing of the proletariat is born and develops upon this terrain. And since it necessarily has to take up the *instituted definition of reality*, it necessarily, in order to begin, takes up "bourgeois" ideas—and it does so long before there was any question of German Idealism or English political economy. In fact, this instituted definition of reality can be preserved within an apparently revolutionary ideology (Marxism itself providing the best example), whereas obscure activities that do not await theorization in order to make their appearance can profoundly contest it. The division between what, in this domain, is "bourgeois" and what is "proletarian" is not given to us in advance, the making/doing of the proletariat alone instaurates it, and *the*

proletariat alone can maintain it (and it is only thus that the problem of "degeneration"–whether it be that of trade unions or the October revolution–can be comprehended).

This also shows, however, that the distinction between what is "reformist" and what is "revolutionary" is not given in advance, either. For, once again, we cannot deduce a concept of the revolution on the basis of a general theory of history or on the basis of the "objective" situation of the working class. Rather, we have to, at our own risk and peril, sift out the significations of a radical revolution on the basis of the actual activity of the proletariat, and that is already no longer a theoretical act but a political one that involves not only our thought but our own making/doing. We also have to recognize the "circularity" of the situation in which we are caught up. Here, too, the illusion of an absolute "foundation" is to be denounced, since it is not our choice that is capable of *founding* a revolutionary interpretation of the history of the workers' movement (our choice is not free in the face of history; it could not interpret this history just anyhow–nor could it be what it is *without this* history), any more than this history *imposes* such an interpretation (others read in the history of the workers' movement only impotence and failure), and since this history *imposes* no choice upon us, except to the extent that we take up [*reprenions*] its signification under our own responsibility.

It is starting with this orientation that the task of studying the history of the workers' movement is to be resumed [*reprendre*]. The task is immense, and there can be no question here even of broaching it. It will, however, be useful to explore the preceding considerations more precisely in the light of a few examples.

Let us begin with banalities. The German trade unions perhaps would not have been founded without the work of political organizations and activists. The latter were profoundly influenced by a number of ideologues and theoreticians, among them Marx. But would Marx have been Marx without the Silesian weavers, Chartism, the Canuts, the Luddites–and the "French socialist workers," for whom "the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase . . . , but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies"?[55] Without these movements and without this experience, could he have made (for better and for worse) the break with "utopian" socialism and affirmed that "of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class"[56] and that "the emancipation of the workers must be conquered by the workers themselves"?[57]

Curious is the obstinacy of those who (starting with Engels himself) see Marxism as essentially the continuation of German Idealism, English political economy, and even utopian socialism, whether French or not–when it could easily be shown that the key socially and politically relevant themes employed by Marx had already been engendered and explicitly formulated between 1790 and 1840 by the nascent workers' movement, and quite particularly by the movement in England.[58] Not so curious, however, if we really reflect on the matter. This cover-up is not accidental, for what has been considered important in Marxism has always been its pseudoscientific side (which, itself, really comes from Hegel and Ricardo) and not the kernel of

working-class creation it has taken up, without which it would have been only another philosophical system.

Can, however, this creation, and this movement, be imputed to a pure spontaneity on the part of the proletariat as such? Or, on the contrary, can it be said that they rigorously reflect and express its "objective" situation? Neither the one nor the other, nor both: such expressions are meaningless here.

The movements of this period, and the English movement more than any other, all lie directly in the wake of the French Revolution. They are conditioned by the huge shock to the established order that this revolution provoked. They are nourished by the incessant incitement and accelerated circulation of ideas that resulted therefrom as much as by the content of these ideas. On the one hand, there is no break in continuity when one retraces the steps from Chartism to the radical "reform" movements, to Owenism, to the sometimes legal, sometimes clandestine trade unions already proliferating during the Napoleonic wars, and back to the political movements, notably the Corresponding Societies that arose in England from 1790 to 1798. Now, in the latter, participation by laborers and "mechanicks" rapidly became quite significant, but the remainder of the contingent was provided by "enlightened" and "radical" members of the bourgeoisie (and even by a few "gentlemen") who from the outset and for a long time afterward contributed to these groups their "explicit" ideas, which are clearly marked by the influence of the American Constitution and above all, and to an increasing degree, of what was being said and done in Paris. Such ideas were "bourgeois," if one is to believe the accepted (and fairly absurd) interpretation. And these ideas concretely expressed the direct influence, by hearsay or by what was "in the air," of the equally "bourgeois" philosophy of the Enlightenment. In England, they fell upon soil already worked over by many still lively religious sects, upon a population profoundly marked by the very fact of a multiplicity of sects, by all the things that this presupposes and by all the things that go along with it, and they contributed to the evolution of this population, first toward deism, and subsequently toward atheism.[59]

We are not saying that the birth of the workers' movement would have been impossible without the condensation of the solar system. We are putting our finger on the direct, precise, flesh-and-bone connections and concatenations that clearly show that the birth of the English workers' movement—neither pure act of spontaneity nor reflex conditioned by the class's objective situation nor rational elaboration of the consequences of this situation—is impossible and inconceivable *in its very content* outside this multidimensional symphony to which the technical and economic upheavals of the era as well as the real political activity of the bourgeoisie, the international situation as well as changes therein, national traditions sometimes dating back before the feudal age, religious movements, "bourgeois" ideology, and philosophical criticism have contributed. These contributions can all be spotted [*repérées*] with certainty, but without our being able at any moment to isolate, separate, order, and reassemble a set of factors that would furnish us the necessary and sufficient conditions for the "result" under consideration—all the less so, since, concerning this result, *we still do not know today*, in 1973, *what it is*; not because we lack information, but because this "result" still has not finished "resulting," inasmuch as we are still implicated in the same historical movement. (Likewise, the "result" of October

1917 continued to occur in 1918, 1921, 1927, 1936, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1956—and it continues to occur in 1973.)

Influence of "bourgeois" ideas? Certainly. Liberty and equality became, right from the start, battle cries for the English workers' movement—but, of course, with a meaning radically opposed to their "bourgeois" meaning. The workers appropriated bourgeois culture, and, in doing so, they inverted its signification. They read Paine, Voltaire, or Volney—but was it in these authors that they found the idea that capital is only accumulated labor, or that the government of the country should be nothing other than the association of producers' unions?

We must, in addition, see how, in the material sense of the term, they appropriated bourgeois culture. From 1800 to 1840, the English proletariat *achieved literacy almost entirely on its own,* cut short its already brief evenings and its Sundays in order to learn how to read and write, and cut into its miserable earnings in order to buy books, newspapers, and candles. Through its own making/doing, the working class took up the tools and contents of the existing culture, and they conferred upon them a new signification.

What it thus took up sometimes dated to the times preceding the bourgeois era. The elimination of permanent officials, of set leaders, is a typical tendency of mass workers' movements as soon as they attain a certain degree of combativeness and autonomy—whether this elimination takes the form of the election and revocability, at any instant, of delegates (communes, soviets, councils, or shop stewards in England) or of the rotation of the participants in posts of responsibility, as was the case for a long time in English trade unions before their bureaucratization. We frequently encounter this rotation method in the "Jacobin" groups in England from 1790 to 1798, but it is also encountered in the Sheffield Corresponding Society in 1792 (which was primarily "working-class" in composition) and in quasi-"soviet" types of organization, which the participants seem to have described, after the old Saxon term, as "tythyngs" (deliberative assemblies of free men).

And what is this "working class" that acts during this period? Can it be defined on the basis of its situation in the relations of production? Absolutely not! The connection some have traditionally tried to establish between the birth of a genuine workers' movement and the appearance of large-scale cotton industry proves fallacious in light of contemporary research;[60] it distorts the facts in order to fit them into an a priori schema. The factories became the center of gravity for the movement as it developed *after* 1830 (or even 1840), but most of the ideas, organizational forms, and what may be called the "class consciousness" of this movement were inherited directly from the struggles of the preceding period, which were led by "plebian" strata of all sorts and in particular by *artisans*—that is to say, by potential members of the "bourgeoisie," if one were to follow here the Marxist conceptualization.

Let us now consider the relations of production in which members of the working class are employed under a typical capitalist regime. Based on the fact that a certain social category has the produced means of production (capital) effectively at its disposal and another disposes only of its labor power, these relations of production take concrete form, according to the Marxist conception and from the standpoint of interest to us here, in the buying and selling of labor power. But *what,* in reality, *is sold,* and *against what* is it sold? A quantity of the "commodity" labor power, against

a quantity of money, that is, wages. But are these definite quantities? Apparently so: so many hours of work, so much in wages. In reality, however, *absolutely not*: labor power is not a commodity like any other, not only because it "produces more than it costs its buyer," but because it is indefinable in advance in its concrete content—which makes it a commodity only in a formal and empty sense—and ultimately because it *is not a commodity* at all. When the capitalist buys a ton of coal, he knows how much heat he can extract from it; for him, the business is settled. When he buys a day of work, the matter has only begun. What he will be able to extract from it in terms of actual output will be the stakes in a struggle that does not stop for a second during the entire workday. Neither the current state of the technical apparatus nor "economic laws" suffice for the determination of what an hour of work *is*, of the real consistence of this abstraction. Rather, it is fully determined—and it is so in a constantly changing fashion—only through the struggle between capitalists and workers, therefore through the *activity* of workers. We thus see immediately that the wage, relatively speaking—namely, as rate of exchange between units of money and "units of actual output"—is indeterminate: "one dollar an hour" signifies nothing, if one does not know what an "hour" signifies. Of course, capitalism's counterresponse to this consists in tying the wage, one way or another, to actual output. That, however, only displaces, and generalizes even, the terrain on which the struggle takes place, for henceforth it has to include the setting of norms, time and motion studies, quality control, job classifications, the distribution of tasks among workers, and so on. In this way, the *whole* organization of labor and that of the business firm ultimately become the stakes in this struggle.[61] Were one to drop the idea of labor power as a commodity and to maintain, as I have done,[62] that the essence of the relations of production is to be found in the division between directors and executants, the conclusion would remain unchanged, for what we are describing here signifies in fact that, beyond the formal, "official" definition of functions, the boundary between the actual process of direction and the actual process of execution is not and cannot be defined in advance and once and for all, but is constantly displaced as a function of the struggle unfolding within the business firm. The workers' *implicit* and "informal" struggle, which mounts an attack on the capitalist organization of production, signifies, ipso facto, that the workers oppose this organization and actually achieve a counterorganization of their own—certainly partial, fragmentary, and changing, but no less effective. Without such a counterorganization, not only would they be unable to resist management, but they would not even be able to accomplish their work.

The historical effects of this struggle have been, and remain, decisive. On the economic level, it has been as much and even more determining than the explicit, official, overt struggle over wages (this being so because, briefly speaking, the latter concerns "contractual rates" of pay, which do not yet tell one anything about real rates); its results have been expressed in the distribution of income over the long haul, the pace and orientation of capital accumulation, the level of employment and unemployment. On the technical and organizational level, this struggle has played a capital role in orienting the changes that have taken place within the production process toward systems that become increasingly independent of individual workers or groups of workers. (That this orientation has till now basically not succeeded in

its aim, and that, in light of this failure, one observes an attempt to return toward "job enrichment" and "autonomous work teams" does not weaken, but strengthens what we are saying.) Finally, let us point out that no sphere of social life has been left untouched by the repercussions of this struggle.[63]

In all its variants, Marxism has remained till the end blind to this struggle.[64] (It is bourgeois industrial sociology that has been obliged to "discover" this struggle when its proponents were led to ask themselves why business firms' efforts to increase output via the "rationalization" of the organization of labor all ended in failure; but obviously this brand of sociology has not been able to recognize it as *struggle*, still less to see that it contains a radical challenge to the capitalist organization of the business firm and to the relationships among people which that type of organization gives rise to.) This blindness is not accidental. As autonomous and anonymous collective activity, implicit and informal struggle on the part of workers has no place in the traditional conceptualization. On the practical level, such struggle is "useless" as far as formal organizations (trade unions and parties) are concerned; it cannot be grasped by them, it cannot be "capitalized" upon; on the theoretical level, it destroys the cornerstone of Marxist "science," the idea that labor power is a commodity, and ultimately the very idea of "economic laws"—just as it demolishes the other cornerstone of Marxist socioeconomics, the idea that the capitalist factory represents a "rational" and "scientific" organization and that the evolutionary path of technical change is *in itself* logical as well as optimal. (These consequences extend immediately to academic economics and, more generally, to every hitherto known type of economic theory; every theory of this type is obliged to postulate that output, the "product of labor," is a function, in the strict sense of the term, of the state of technique and of the quantity of capital—a postulate that the activity of workers *renders false* or, more exactly, *meaningless*.)

The activity of the proletariat has generally been known and recognized only to the extent that it has been *explicit* and manifest, expressed in the light of day. This is due not only, or not so much, to the banal fact that this type of struggle is easier to notice and to observe (Marx spent his life trying to sort out the nonmanifest essence of the capitalist economy). The basic reason is that, both in the objectives at which they have aimed ("economic" and "political" demands in the narrow and traditional sense of the term) and in the forms they have taken (strike, demonstration, voting, insurrection), explicit struggles usually correspond, more or less, to the concepts and categories the theoretician has already constructed, to those characteristics and variables of the instituted regime the theoretician considers fundamental, to the forms of action the theoretician considers valid because they can be inserted into his strategy. The schema operating behind the scenes is always that of an (individual or collective) subject proposing clear and distinct ends and coming up with actions that are conceived as means to attain these ends. The implicit, daily struggle of the proletariat, however, is absolutely incapable of being grasped from this perspective—as is also the case, for example, with the daily (and circadian) pressure by which women for over a century, and young people for the past twenty-five years, have succeeded to a considerable extent in modifying their actual situation within the family and within society, and in relation to which explicit organizations and demonstrations represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Let us consider, finally, the true underlying stakes of the implicit, daily struggle of workers in production, which sometimes also explodes in broad daylight, as in many wildcat strikes. We have already indicated earlier the economic aspects and effects. Yet it would be absurd to see in the economic side the sole, or even the essential, signification. On one hand, even if the motive were exclusively the defense or the increase of real wages, this motivation itself passes by way of a challenge to the existing organization of work and labor conditions, in the largest sense, as these are imposed by the firm; it is in reality and logically inseparable from them, since what is aimed at is not a wage in the abstract, but a wage that relates to a certain ["amount" of] labor ("a fair day's work," as English workers say). In the second place, these labor conditions in the large sense (which have finally been discovered by trade unionists and Marxists of various tendencies after having been long ignored or grouped condescendingly under the metonymic label of the "broken toilet handle" in France, of "local grievances" in the United States) give rise, as such, to struggles whose signification goes far beyond the issue of pay. When workers launched wildcat strikes to win a fifteen-minute coffee break,[65] trade unionists and Marxists tended to consider such a demand as trivial or indicative of the workers' backwardness. It was the trade unionists and Marxists, however, who were trivial and backward. By lodging such a demand, the workers were challenging the very foundation of the capitalist organization of the business enterprise and of society—namely, that man exists for production—and they opposed to this the principle of organizing production around the needs and life of man the producer.[66] Indeed, when the collectivity in the shop gives rise to norms of behavior that sanction, in an informal way, both the "ratebusters" and the "shirkers" and when it constantly is constituting itself and reconstituting itself into "informal" groups responsive both to the exigencies of work and to personal affinities, what else is it doing but opposing, not in words, but in deeds, new principles of productive and social organization to the capitalist principles and point of view, for which people are merely a mass of mutually repellent molecules (competition) moved exclusively by the attraction of [personal] gain, which thus attaches them to the different points in the mechanical universe of the factory?

For the traditional conception, this entire set of manifestations can only be considered "reformist," since it cannot explicitly put into question the instituted power of a society and since that power can somehow or other accommodate itself to it. That, however, constitutes only a formal and ultimately empty criterion. For us, this set of manifestations clearly is expressive of an activity as radical as any other; it does not put into question the externals of the established power; it undermines, rather, the capitalist foundations, capitalism's definition of reality, that is to say, its definition of what counts and of what really matters. That a revolutionary transformation of society would bring about the elimination of that power is hardly worth recalling, but the fact that this elimination (something about which revolutionary currents have always been obsessed) would, as such, change nothing unless much more thoroughgoing modifications (ones that cannot be carried out in a single day and that alone would give this elimination of the established power revolutionary signification) were already underway, can be confirmed, if need be, by all of historical experience since 1917.

We therefore cannot reduce the social-historical making/doing of the proletariat to the abstract concepts of "reform" and of "revolution" that have been imposed upon it by a *strategic* (and therefore bureaucratic) form of thought. Instead of allowing itself to be educated by proletarian making/doing, this form of thought tries at all costs to measure such action with the yardstick of its own pseudotheoretical schemata and is able to see in the latter only what corresponds to its own obsession for power. I will return elsewhere to the deep-seated and hypocritical *duplicity* that, in this strategic outlook, is characteristic of the traditional attitude toward "immediate" proletarian demands and struggles. (Briefly speaking, the attitude is this: the organization *knows*, in accordance with its own alleged theory, that the satisfaction of these demands is "impossible" within the framework of the existing regime, but it is quite careful not to *say* this directly to the workers; if the workers take the hook of the demand, they will very well end up, without knowing it, swallowing the whole revolutionary line; and, in struggling for these "impossible to satisfy" demands, they accentuate, anyway, the "crisis of the regime.") Nor ought we to harbor the illusion that the significations this social-historical making/doing bears could be boiled down to a simple system of concepts of any kind. Through its activity, the proletariat, going on two centuries, has profoundly modified its situation in capitalist society, as well as this society itself. We can, as we have just done, discern in this activity a content in deep rupture with the capitalist universe. We cannot, for all that, ignore another aspect of the proletariat's struggle—the one that transpires in its *actual results*. These results are expressed through modifications in the system, *ones that have in fact permitted it to function and to survive*: briefly speaking, they have conditioned the continued expansion of capitalist production by enlarging incessantly its domestic markets.[67]

Let us observe here the reversal of the Machiavellianism of would-be revolutionary strategists. Supporting wage-based demands because their success would lead to the ruination of the system becomes in reality helping wage-based demands to succeed, which contributes to the survival of the system. Within the Hegelo-Marxist philosophical regime, the true goal is obviously not what the author of the operation represents to himself, but what actually results from it. Here, therefore: the rationality and finality immanent to movements for wage increases was the continued expansion and consolidation of the capitalist economy (which actually would have collapsed an incalculable number of times over had real wages remained at their 1820 levels). Or, the following: the objective assigned to the working class, the historical role inscribed in its position within the capitalist relations of production, was to maintain capitalism against everything the capitalists represented and immediately aimed for; those who think that the cunning of reason is at work in history should have the courage to say that it has made of the proletariat not the gravedigger, but the savior of capitalism.

An analogous conclusion follows, within the Hegelo-Marxist framework, if one considers the revolutionary activity of the proletariat: briefly, where it has not failed, this activity has (for the moment—a moment that has lasted [since 1917]) resulted in the totalitarian power of the bureaucracy. For, of course, "[it] is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment

represents to itself as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do."[68]

The absurdity of these conclusions reminds us, once again, of the absurdity of the ideology that renders them inevitable. This does not spare us from having to make a fresh start. Nor does it spare us from having to reflect on the immense questions raised, on the one hand, by the proletariat's *involvement* [*implication*] in the society in which it lives and, on the other hand, by our own political involvement (without which the history of the workers' movement would be for us, at best, but a lifeless object of knowledge). No theoretical construction and no [Althusserian] "scientificity" will ever succeed in separating these effects from what we see and from what we say about it.

Through its explicit as well as implicit activity, the proletariat determines the concrete content of the relations of production in which it is employed as much as and more than it is determined by them. This activity, which is essentially different from the institution of the new relations of production that resulted from the activity of the bourgeoisie, is not a property of "classes" in general, or of exploited "classes" in particular. It finds support in a set of specific, historically unique factors characteristic of capitalism.[69] Indeed, these factors may be boiled down to the fact that the proletariat, in its activity, is not driven into an "all-or-nothing" situation, that the proletariat *can* defend itself against exploitation because it can, day after day, attack "partial" aspects of the organization of production, of the business firm, and of capitalist society. In its turn, this possibility rests, on the one hand, on the intrinsically *contradictory* character of this organization, which simultaneously requires and excludes the active participation of the laborer in the management of his work; and, on the other hand, on the social, political, and ideological situation created by the bourgeoisie, which, as it came to dominate society, dissolved the traditional significations (those that had sanctified power and social hierarchy for the mere fact that they existed) and claimed that henceforth "reason" alone was to be sovereign. When, for lack of a better term, we speak here, however, of "possibility," we are not intending the ideal and fully determined preexisting being of what is going to become actual reality through mere addition of matter, which in no way alters this ideal being (as a double six was possible before the dice were thrown). At this level of historical consideration, the distinction between the actual and the possible is strictly meaningless: the a posteriori construction of the possibility of a situation neither adds nor subtracts anything from what we know on the basis of what *actually* has occurred; the actual creation yields, to analytical reflection, the appearance of an "ideal possibility" for an actuality that has no need of it. Analytical reflection thus does nothing but transpose illegitimately a category of the subject's acting, usually placed within a framework of predetermined possibilities already outlined by the institution of society, into the instituting social-historical making/doing that is creative of this framework of possibilities. We would not be able to see today any "conditions of possibility" in these "points of support" that the proletariat, through its making/doing, finds in instituted society were this making/doing not to have taken on dimensions and created significations going far beyond the mere "reactions" of an exploited class to its situation.

This can be seen just as clearly in the *political* movement of the working class.

Since the origins of this movement, in England as well as in France, workers have taken their bearings from "bourgeois" ideas, but in order to transform the actual signification of those ideas and ultimately in order to go beyond [*dépasser*] them. The struggle for political and social "rights" not only is not "rendered possible by existing conditions," these conditions tend to render it "impossible," and this struggle is struggle *against* these very conditions. Moreover, it is, if one may say so, nourished from the outset by its own transcendence [*dépassement*], for the fundamental fact in this regard is that almost immediately the active strata of the proletariat explicitly put into question the social order as such, attack the property and the domination of the bourgeoisie, and aim for a universal organization of the producers, which they want to render identical to the organization of society. The criticism formulated earlier against an *exclusive* preoccupation with the proletariat's explicit struggles in no way signifies that one could for a second underestimate the decisive importance of its political activity: it is in and through the latter that disparate and profoundly heterogeneous categories of workers—the "working classes" —actually constitute themselves as a class, speak of themselves and think of themselves as *one* class, and they do so in the space of a few decades, before capitalism objectively "unifies" them; indeed, their self-constitution is practically achieved in England and in France before the middle of the nineteenth century. Through this activity, the workers assert themselves not only as a class *within* capitalist society, but as a class *against* capitalist society; they give rise to the explicit and intentionally conscious aim of radically reconstructing society and abolishing classes. This aim becomes instrumented in the institution of new forms of struggle and organization, such as the mass political party, and also the trade union (which takes on and maintains for a long time a revolutionary character and which, in England, remains for decades the expression of the power of the grass roots and of direct democracy—what Lenin will contemptuously call, in *What Is to Be Done?*, "primitive democracy"), and which culminates in the creation of new institutions of mass power, the commune, soviets, workers' councils. Briefly speaking, in and through the activity of the working class is born a revolutionary social-historical *project*. From that moment on, and for a long time afterward, these different aspects—daily implicit struggle within the production process, explicit economic or political struggles, revolutionary project—cannot be separated, either "objectively" or "subjectively," except in a derivative and secondary sense; this is what also prevents one from tracing an absolute line of demarcation between "the immediate" and "the historical."

What therefore arises through the proletariat's making/doing in history is a new relationship of an exploited stratum to the relations of production (and, of course, to the *fact* of exploitation itself). A new relationship of an exploited stratum to the instituted social system also is brought about, inasmuch as, through struggle, this stratum becomes capable of codetermining to a decisive degree the evolution of that system. Last of all and above all, a new relationship of a social stratum to society and to history *as such* is established, inasmuch as the activity of this stratum gives rise to an explicit outlook concerning the radical transformation of the institution of society and of the course of history. It is only by reference to these significations that one can, beyond mere empirical criteria, think what during an entire era has *made itself* as working class and workers' movement.

Permit me here to open a parenthesis. We have raised the question: What is the history of the workers' movement, in what sense can one speak of a history (and of a class) when one is confronted with the real and apparent diversity and dispersion of the manifestations of the proletariat's social existence and activity? The overriding importance of this question became apparent to me very early on. My first responses, however, were unsatisfactory, for they remained within the framework of inherited thought. Thus, in my article entitled "Phenomenology of Proletarian Consciousness,"[70] I tried to grasp this history as a phenomenology in the Hegelian sense: development realizing figures that appear, each time, as incarnations of the aim immanent to the activity in question and its truth, but revealing in what is realized a particular and limited moment of this truth, therefore its negation, which is itself to be negated and transcended in its turn until there is a final realization, a concrete univeral containing all the previously transcended moments and presenting the meaning of their truth known as such. This point of view—which also underlies the description of the history of the workers' movement retraced in *SB*—seems to render intelligible the different aspects of the workers' movement, as well as their succession. Thus, for example, the "stage," or better "moment" (for it is not a matter, of course, of a simply chronological evolution), of reformism, as well as that of the "revolutionary party," which transforms itself immediately into a bureaucratic totalitarian party, can be conceived as figures in which the proletariat believes it can incarnate its liberation, but which, once realized and due to the very fact of this realization, reveal themselves as the negation of this liberation and, to the extent that the proletarian struggle continues, as doomed to being transcended and destroyed. The history of the workers' movement would thus be the dialectic of an experience.[71] The intelligibility offered by this point of view, however, is a false intelligibility, or rather, it is mere intelligibility: beyond the fact that it is fixed almost exclusively on political activity, it can posit the latter's unity only in terms of the idea of an end, of a telos that would be immanent to it and that theoretical thought has known how to define in advance, be it in an abstract manner. The principal stages marking the transcendence of this viewpoint have been as follows: the explicit introduction of the idea of the circularity between project and interpretation ("Sartre, Stalinism, and the Workers" [1953], now in *PSW 1*); an enlargement upon the notion of activity beyond political activity and the critique of the traditional conception of theory ("On the Content of Socialism, I" [*CS I* (1955)], in *PSW 1*, as well as *CS II* [1957] and *CS III* [1958], in *PSW 2*, and "Bilan, perspectives, tâches" [1957], in *EMO 1*, pp. 383–406); the new discussion of the history of working-class struggles and forms of organization and the interpretation of "degeneration" as persistence or resurgence of capitalist significations and models within the workers' movement ("Proletariat and Organization, I" [*PO I*, 1958], in *PSW 2*); the explicit criticism of the idea of a process that in itself would lead to the "ripening" of "objective" as well as "subjective revolutionary conditions," therefore also of the idea of a cumulative proletarian experience ("Modern Capitalism and Revolution" [*MRCM/MCR*, 1959–61], in *PSW 2*, where, nevertheless, the idea of an "accumulation of objective conditions for an adequate consciousness"—still criticizable inasmuch as it tacitly offered itself a solution that alone could define the "adequacy" of this consciousness—was maintained). A response that truly breaks with the tradi-

tional conceptualization was possible, however, only on the basis of and in terms of the work carried out in "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory" [*MTR/MRT* (1964–65), now the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*] and of the notions that text attempted to formulate and elucidate. These are the notions that underlie what has been written above.

In order to facilitate understanding of the pages that follow, one of these notions must be recalled at this time. It is that of the *revolutionary project*. This social-historical project proceeds neither from a subject nor from a definable category of subjects. Its nominal bearer is never but a transitory support. It is not a technical concatenation of means serving ends rationally defined once and for all, nor is it a strategy grounded on an established knowledge placed within given "objective" and "subjective" conditions, but rather the open engendering of significations oriented toward a radical transformation of the social-historical world; borne by an activity that modifies the conditions under which it unfolds, the goals it gives itself, and the agents who accomplish it; and unified by the idea of the *autonomy* of man and of society.

The question of the workers' movement and of its history—which is inextricably entangled with the question of the political and ideological currents that have influenced it: so-called utopian socialism, Marxism, anarchism—is for us not simply or essentially a theoretical question. Confronted with the generalized dislocation that is shaking contemporary society with greater force than any mere economic "crisis" ever could and that is perceptible to all as well as daily acknowledged by the representatives of the ruling system themselves, no genuine political making/doing, no genuine political aim, can exist unless this making/doing and this aim feel gripped by the social question in all its profundity, unless they envisage this question from no other perspective than that of a radical transformation of society, unless they therefore are conceived as nothing other than the historical continuation or recommencement of the revolutionary project that has been engendered by the workers' movement. There can be no politics that professes to be revolutionary in character unless it tries to render explicit and to elucidate its relationship to its historical origin and root, the workers' movement.

The history of the workers' movement is the history of the activity of people belonging to a socioeconomic category created by capitalism (and of others, who have struggled at their sides). Through such activity, this category transforms itself—or rather *makes itself* (and speaks of itself and thinks of itself) as a "class" in a new sense of this term—and actually constitutes itself into a "class" for which history offers no close or distant analogy. It transforms itself by transforming the passivity, the fragmentation, the competition capitalism aims at and tends to impose upon it into activity, solidarity, collectivization, thereby overturning the signification of the capitalist collectivization of labor. In its daily life, both within the factories and outside them, it invents ever renewed counterresponses to exploitation, it engenders principles hostile as well as foreign to capitalism, and it creates original forms of organization and struggle. It tries to unite beyond borders, taking as its hymn a song called "The international." It pays for capitalist ignominy with the heaviest tribute of poverty, persecution, deportations, prison, and blood. At the highest points of its his-

tory, it creates new universal institutions embodying its collective power, and it proves capable of acting with an audacity and a political profundity rarely equaled by other collectivities in history.

Thus transformed through its activity from an object of exploitation into a social force determining history for a century and a half, the working class has also transformed capitalist society through the direct and indirect effects of its explicit or implicit struggles, through its constant pressure on the system, through the need imposed upon capitalists to anticipate its reactions and to take them into account. Nevertheless, the provisional "result" of this transformation (to which factors "proper" to capitalism obviously have contributed, inasmuch as such a separation can be made) has been the *disappearance* of the workers' movement as an *originary* and *autonomous* social-historical force.[72] The working class, in the proper sense of the term, is tending more and more to become numerically a minority stratum within the countries of modern capitalism; more important still, it no longer manifests itself and no longer *posits itself* as a class. Certainly, one can witness the parallel transformation of almost the entirety of the laboring population into a wage-earning population, but what are we to say about these changes, if not precisely that it no longer makes much sense to speak in terms of classes? Still less than in the "objective" situation of the industrial worker is there in that of the wage earner in general a revolutionary predestination. What is decisive in this regard are not descriptive socioeconomic characteristics, but rather the activity through which people, in the social sites in which they are situated, live and act social conflict and, more exactly, *constitute* it as *social* conflict; the forms of organization and struggle they invent; the contents that emerge during these struggles; and, finally, the capacity—be it partial, minoritarian, intermittent—of these people to take aim at society as a whole, to assert their desire and will to take charge of the organization and functioning of society.

From all these standpoints, it is clear that today one can neither maintain a privileged position for the proletariat in the traditional sense nor mechanically extend its characteristics to wage earners as a whole, nor, finally, pretend that the latter behave as a *class*, even an embryonic one. Alienation in contemporary capitalist society, the contradictions in and the intensive wear and tear on the system, the struggle against that system under an infinite variety of forms—all the strata of modern society, with the exception of the ruling summits, live out this alienation, these contradictions, this struggle and act them out in their daily existence. Whether one is talking about categories of wage earners lying outside the industrial proletariat, students and young people, growing sections of the female population, segments of the body of intellectuals and scientists, or ethnic minorities, we rediscover what really mattered in the exemplary struggles of the industrial proletariat: their questioning of specific aspects of the oppressive organization of the system, which contains potentially a generalized questioning of that system. The workers' struggles around working conditions have gone and still go very far—but not farther than the students' questioning of the present educational system and of the traditional type and function of knowledge, or women's and young people's questioning of the patriarchal family. In comparison with these different struggles, those of the proletariat would enjoy a privilege only if one could state that, in a revolutionary transforma-

tion of society, production and work possess an exorbitant importance. Now, that is not the case (which does not mean that they should be evacuated or neglected). The interrelationship of all aspects of social life and of the problems the transformation thereof would pose prevents one from being able to define a central and sovereign point dominating all others. To accept the idea of such a point, as well as to identify it with production and work, is Marxist metaphysics, both in its "monism" and in its productivism, which is only the sequel to capitalist productivism. That the *business enterprise* has been, and remains to a certain degree, a privileged place of socialization under capitalism is certainly true and important—but that does not reduce the importance of other sites of socialization that now exist, and, more important still, of *those that are to be created.* Conversely, if one considers the most difficult aspect of a revolutionary social transformation—the question of taking charge of the overall operation of society, of taking explicit aim at society as a whole—the experience of the [period since the late 1940s] in the countries of modern capitalism shows that privatization and social and political apathy have penetrated even more deeply into working-class strata than into the others.

This situation liquidates as well the question of Marxism as a theoretico-political conception presenting itself as revolutionary and as an ideology claiming to settle the problem of political activity under capitalism. For this situation provides the ultimate *internal* criterion for settling the question, independent of all merely theoretical criticism, independent even of the ultimate historical fate of Marxism as the bureaucracy's actual ideology.

The workers' movement has coincided with Marxism for a long time and in many countries (but not always, and not in all of them). This relationship has quite clearly played a key role in the evolution of the one as of the other. By itself, this fact poses a number of difficult problems that cannot be discussed here. Nevertheless, the workers' movement has not been Marxism, and Marxism has not been the workers' movement. What Marxism has been able to contribute of a fruitful and positive nature to the workers' movement is difficult to see. Understanding [*intelligence*] of the organization and operation of capitalist society, as we have seen, had for all practical purposes already been established within the workers' movement during the first half of the nineteenth century. Marxism has rather obscured this understanding by forcing it to enter into the labyrinth of a false science, and Marxism has clothed the identity of the proletariat and its ongoing process of achieving "self-awareness" in the metaphysical-mythical veil of a "historical mission." What, in Marx's thought, was the rapidly frozen germ of a new orientation, undeciphered and undecipherable by Marxists themselves, has hardly penetrated at all the workers' movement, and with good reason. What has penetrated very well into this movement, on the contrary, has been the system of theses, the scientifico-religious catechism by which Marxism has become the transmission belt into the proletariat of capitalist significations, the subtle means of assuring the survival and the domination of capitalist principles at the deepest level: the solemn theorization of the primacy of the productive and of the economic; the consecration, as inevitable, of capitalist production techniques and organization; the justification of wage inequality; scientism; rationalism; an organic blindness to the question of the bureaucracy; the adoration,

and importation into the workers' movement, of capitalist models of organization and effectiveness.

These are but a few of the most massive themes that help us to spot Marxism's firm anchorage within the capitalist universe, the pernicious influence it has exercised over the workers' movement, and what has predestined it as the natural ideology of the bureaucracy. That all this may be a Marxism that "deforms" the thought of Marx matters not at all (even if that were true, which is not the case). This is actual historical Marxism; any other kind would exist, at best, only between the lines of a few texts.[73] These themes—and, par excellence, the one that stands over and conditions them all, that of the existence of a theoretical knowledge about society, history, and revolution that would provide, for those who possess it, the guarantee of truth and the right to *judge* in all senses of the word—have contributed heavily to the reinforcement of the direct influences capitalist society has continued to exercise over the proletariat.

We are in a position today to sift from these themes their social-historical signification and to show that they are the flesh and blood of the world we combat. We know, too, that the theoretical edifice of Marxism is untenable, that the intelligibility it provides concerning the functioning of society is limited and ultimately fallacious, that its assigning of a "historical mission" to the proletariat is mythical, as moreover is the idea of a historical mission, regardless of whoever might be its bearer.

Nevertheless, what really matters lies elsewhere. Not according to some secondary implication or another, but according to the very flesh and the actual movement of the totality of the ideas of which it is made, Marxism would be admissible only as the "conscious expression" of the aspirations and activities of a proletariat that alone would be the true revolutionary class aiming at abolishing class society and at constructing a communist one. Now, that is not what Marxism is, and it cannot be so. First, because there is no longer a proletariat as sole truly revolutionary class; there is a proletariat, but it is a minority in society and it does not take itself to be a revolutionary class (and not even a "class"), and its struggle against the instituted system is, both quantitatively and qualitatively, neither more nor less important than that of other social strata. Next, because Marxism *is not* today the conscious expression of what there is of a revolutionary nature that these struggles on the part of the proletariat or of other social strata may contain; it is not its expression at all, since Marxism is at best indifferent and, most often, potentially or overtly hostile to all that.

Henceforth, Marxism can effectively be only an ideology in the strong sense of the term: an invocation of fictitious entities, of pseudorational constructions and abstract principles that, in the concrete, justify and cover up a social-historical practice whose true signification is to be found elsewhere. This practice is that of a bureaucracy that imposes its exploitation and its totalitarian domination on a third of the world's population. To be unaware of this, or to consider it merely anecdotal, or to rationalize it away as accidental, one must truly be a Marxist.

The connection—or better, the lack of distinction—that has long existed between the workers' movement, the ideologies invoking its name, and the revolutionary pro-

ject has today dissolved from within. Looking "with sober senses" on what exists and what is done we have to say that such is the provisional result of two centuries of history and of struggles both practical and theoretical. In a world society where every joint is cracking, where the political problem is being posed as a total problem with an acuity never before known, we remain within the hold of the revolutionary project engendered by the working class, the author of which, however, is withdrawing and disappearing into the crowd of social actors. We find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of glimpsing more and more clearly—or at least we believe so—what a radical social-historical transformation involves, and less and less *who* can accomplish it.

Perhaps, however, the situation is paradoxical only in appearance. To seek *an* actor who would personify this project—a man, a party, a theory, or even a "class"—would still be to misrecognize the exigencies created by social-historical developments, the broadening and deepening henceforth required of all revolutionary activity. The revolutionary project has become such that it will have no meaning, nor any reality, if the overwhelming majority of men and women who live in contemporary society do not come to assume it as their own and to make it the active expression of their needs and of their desires. There is no supreme savior, and no particular category bears full responsibility for the fate of humanity.

July-September 1973

Notes

1. See "Bilan, perspectives, tâches," *S. ou B.*, 21 (March 1957); reprinted in *EMO 1*, pp. 383–408.

2. T/E: *The Holy Family*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (*MECW*), vol. 4 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 37.

3. It is striking to note that it is under the pretense of invoking *praxis* that Lukács and Gramsci, each in his own way, tried during the 1920s to theorize this position. [T/E: It should also be noted that it was Stalin's sycophants who originated the phrase "coryphaeus" (leader of the Greek chorus) to describe him.]

4. See, for example, "Socialisme ou Barbarie," *S. ou B.*, 1 (March 1949), pp. 42–46; *SB* is reprinted in *SB 1*, pp. 178–83 [T/E: translated in *PSW 1*, pp. 102–6].

5. "Le Parti révolutionnaire," reprinted *EMO 1*, pp. 121–43. [T/E: This article, originally published in *S. ou B.*, 2 (May 1949), has not been translated for the *PSW* series.]

6. "La Direction prolétarienne," *S. ou B.*, 10 (July 1952); reprinted in *EMO 1*, pp. 145–61 [T/E: translated in *PSW 1*, pp. 198–206].

7. "Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 17 (July 1955); *CS 1* is reprinted in *CS*, pp. 67–102 [T/E: translated in *PSW 1*, pp. 290–309].

8. See the texts on these strikes in *EMO 1*. [T/E: See the first three chapters of *PSW 2*.]

9. See the texts published in *SB 2*. [T/E: These texts have been republished in a single-volume edition of *La Société bureaucratique* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990). Three of these articles are translated as the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of *PSW 2*.]

10. See note 1.

11. "Sur le contenu du socialisme," *S. ou B.*, 22 (July 1957); *CS II* is reprinted in *CS*, pp. 103–221 [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 90–154].

12. "Prolétariat et organisation," *S. ou B.*, 27 (April 1959); *PO I* is reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 123–87 [T/E: translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 193–222].

13. T/E: Castoriadis is actually referring, in this introduction to *EMO 1*, to texts reprinted in that volume and in *EMO 2*.

14. T/E: The only "new text" that appeared in *EMO 2* is "The Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes" (translated as chapter 13 in this volume).

15. T/E: This introduction was written in 1973.

16. T/E: Jacques Duclos (1896–1975) was a French Communist party politician elected to the National Assembly and then to the Senate; he ran unsuccessfully for the office of president of the Republic in 1969. See "Sartre, Stalinism, and the Workers," *PSW 1*, p. 209.

17. New York: Pantheon, 1964. Of course, if one considers the privileged "moments" of the workers' movement, then the historical writings of Marx and Engels, Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1980), Daniel Guérin's *Class Struggle in the First French Republic. Bourgeois and Bras Nus 1793–1797*, trans. Ian Patterson (London: Pluto Press, 1977), and a few other works are equally to be included among these exceptions.

18. T/E: This line appears in the revolutionary song, "L'Internationale."

19. See the fourth and fifth parts of "Marxisme et théorie révolutionnaire," *S. ou B.*, 39 (March 1965) and 40 (June 1965); *MTR* is reprinted in *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 130–230. [T/E: *MRT* is now available as the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (*IIS*), trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Oxford: Polity Press, 1987); see pp. 95–164.]

20. The interested reader will find a discussion of the character of inherited thought in *IIS*.

21. I will not enter here into the questions, certainly very important, and not only from the standpoint of the history of ideas, that are raised by the brutal reversal one is obliged to perform on the basis of Aristotle's text itself; still less do I have to defend the author against the reproach of "being contradictory" (and myself against the charge of "not knowing how to read"). Let us note simply that the different and in part heterogeneous strata of thought deposited in the first Book of the *Politics* are evident to the attentive reader, and that, in my view, Aristotle (like, moreover, Plato) is working here under the requirement that he maintain an untenable balance between the great imaginary signification of the polis—the founding signification of the post-Homeric Greek world—and the process of dissolution of this same world, commonly imputed to this or that "real" evolution of events and associated with this or that philosophical school, but which in fact began with the birth of philosophy, since this process of dissolution was already virtually contained in the positing of a subject who inquires in an autonomous manner. What really matters is the logic at work and the permanence of its effects until the present time. [T/E: A different perspective on the relationship between philosophy, politics, and autonomy can be found in Castoriadis's *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); see especially the chapters on "Intellectuals and History," "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy," and the opening pages of "The Nature and Value of Equality."]

22. T/E: Castoriadis adopts a different attitude toward the possible "for-itselfhood" of social-historical objects such as Rome in his more recent writings. In, e.g., "The State of the Subject Today" (*Thesis Eleven*, 24 [1989], p. 11), he refers to the "evident fact that each society possesses the essential attributes of the for-itself: the finality of self-preservation, self-centeredness, and the construction of a world of one's own." Just as evident, though, is the fact that Castoriadis has formulated a new conception of the "for-itself," for now the "living being" (*le vivant*, mentioned above in the present article), the psyche, the social individual, the human subject, and societies capable of self-reflection are considered "for-itselfs" just as much as "each society" is. We might also point out that (1) there is a meaningful continuity in Castoriadis's elucidation of social-historical objects: his insistence in the present article and elsewhere on a society's self-organizing (or, better, self-instituting) character will lead to his later reassessment of the possible "for-itselfhood" of a society; (2) his denial of any "dialectical" or "rational" progression to human history (cf. his criticism, in the next paragraph, of the Hegelian Absolute Subject), which here motivates his rejection of the idea that a society is or has a for-itself (cf. his comment, in the next paragraph, on how the Hegelian "spirit of the people" becomes "visible *for itself* and for all"), will become, if anything, more explicit in later texts such as "Individual, Rationality, History, Society," the fourth chapter of *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*; and finally, (3) what may appear here as an ambiguity in his critique of the status of the subject and of the for-itself, and leads to the reexamination he undertakes in "The State of the Subject Today," must be read in the context of his double intention: to deny the existence of a transcendental or trans-historical rational subject while also avoiding, and taking issue with, the irresponsiblity of "death of the subject" discourses (see note 24), this avoidance and this denial being the negative side of his positive affirmation that the revolutionary project is based on the simultaneous *historical emergence* of an autonomous individual subject and of an autonomous self-instituting collectivity, both of them capable of self-reflection and self-deliberation. Most curious of all, however, Castoriadis had just complained that inherited thought prevented social-historical making/doing from ever being "seen as such and for itself."

23. Again, it must be a *historical* people, that is to say, cosmohistorical (*weltgeschichtlich*). As is known, very few of them exist, and it is difficult to see the philosophical foundation for the existence of others, their raison d'être. Perhaps one should recall, employing a celebrated paragraph from the *Philosophy of Right*, that everything that is not reality as posited by reason is external appearance, illusion, and error, and thereby resolve to count among the illusory and fallacious appearances the existence of the Incas, the Huns, the Africans, the Japanese, the Indonesians, and a few other peoples. It is not uninteresting to note that when, at the end of forty years of philosophy, Husserl ultimately was led by the combination of the crisis of modern science and the rise of Nazism to suspect the existence of history (but not, any more than Heidegger, that of society), he attempted to relate it to the *eingeborene Telos der europäischen Menschheit*—to the "innate telos of European humanity." Asia is without a why, the poet would say. What a strange necessity, innate to a certain philosophy, that allows it to speak (poorly) of a quarter of what is only by excluding the being of the other three quarters.

24. What is being discussed here is the elevation of the category of subject into ontological prototype, not its legitimacy in its own domain. This criticism, therefore, should not be confused with certain oratorical exercises now in fashion that proclaim the death of the subject after that of man.

25. See the first three parts of *MRT*, now in *IIS*, pp. 9-95.

26. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 178.

27. T/E: I have translated Castoriadis's version of this statement. In the English translation of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (*MESW*) [New York: International Publishers, 1968], p. 35), where this famous statement appears, Marx and Engels say in somewhat less grandiose terms, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." In the 1888 English edition, Engels added a footnote after "hitherto existing society" that reads, "That is, all *written* history. In 1847, the prehistory of society, the social organization existing previous to recorded history, was all but unknown." He offers some examples from "prehistory" and cites his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. I do not think that the fact that Castoriadis's citation is somewhat perfunctory changes the basic question at issue. See, for example, *IIS*, pp. 150-56, on the incapacity of Marxism, or any other *theory* of society to *explain* fully (reproduce in the understanding) the rise of class societies, and on the assumptions behind Marx and Engels's views precisely of "prehistory."

28. See *MRT II*, in *IIS*, pp. 28-61.

29. T/E: The phrase comes from Marx's preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (*MESW*, p. 182). I also take the previous quotation in this paragraph, "those involved are unaware of what is going on" (*l'inconscience des intéressés*), to be a reference to this preface, where the "consciousness of men" is opposed, and subordinated, to their "social being."

30. Just as, in the Hegelian system, there is a problem of non-"historical" peoples, and a necessary silence with regard to them, there is, in the Marxist system, the problem of the classes to which no "historical role" whatsoever can be assigned, and a necessary silence with regard to them.

31. T/E: Unless I am mistaken, the phrase seems to stem from two passages in *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 715 (referring to serfs who have not only "ceased to be attached to the soil" but who "further have escaped from the regime of the guilds") and 750 ("escaped serfs").

32. T/E: Ibid., p. 742.

33. T/E: Ibid.

34. T/E: Ibid.

35. T/E: Ibid., p. 737. Castoriadis's French citation reads in translation, "[T]he nascent bourgeoisie cannot dispense with constant state intervention."

36. T/E: Ibid., p. 751.

37. T/E: Ibid., p. 750.

38. T/E: Ibid., p. 764, note 1. The French phrase for "involuntary" here would read in translation "passive and unconscious."

39. T/E: The reference here is to a scene in Molière, where Monsieur Jourdain discovers he had been speaking prose all along, but without "knowing" it. One may note that this passage, which concerns the rise of capitalism from the classical bourgeoisie, is making reference to a scene appearing in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

40. That one could always string together some explanations for this "failure" by invoking other historical factors changes nothing at the root of the question. Beyond the fact that these "explanations"

are always specious, they boil down, in the least trivial cases (as in Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution"), to highlighting factors that have inhibited or hindered the development of the activity of the bourgeoisie—therefore to recognizing implicitly that this activity (which has not been hindered in the "favorable" cases) is neither reflection nor trivial and obligatory expression of the social-historical situation, but agent for the transformation of this situation.

41. It goes without saying that we are trying to draw out here the logical necessities ruling the construction of Marx's concept of class within the framework of his system—not the actual historical genesis of the concept of class, which began, as one knows, long before Marx.

42. T/E: This line, which describes the soothsayer Calchas (to whom Castoriadis refers in the next sentence), appears in the *Iliad*, I.70. I have simply translated Castoriadis's French.

43. "Competition" in fact is created and imposed by the bourgeoisie at a very late stage in its development. The bourgeoisie is born and grows up in a setting that has nothing competitive about it. It would have had great difficulty being born otherwise, and, in fact, from the origins of the bourgeoisie till this day, genuine economic competition has prevailed only exceptionally, fragmentarily, and for short time intervals. Competition has never been but a weapon of the stronger bourgeoisie against the weaker; from the corporations and from Colbert to [French President Valéry] Giscard d'Estaing and to American Senate committees, it has never been good except for others.

44. That this "rationalization" is really nothing of the sort I have tried to show in other writings: see, in particular, *CS I*, *II*, and *III*, and *MRT V*, in *IIS*, pp. 135–64.

45. T/E: The Canuts were Lyon-region silk weavers who revolted in 1835.

46. T/E: FAI stands for Federación Anarquista Iberica, the Iberian Anarchist Federation, which was active during the Spanish Civil War.

47. T/E: Again, 1973 is the year Castoriadis's text was written.

48. T/E: "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *MESW*, p. 36.

49. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 763.

50. Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), p. 104.

51. T/E: From "Organizational Question of Social Democracy" (1904), in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 130.

52. T/E: Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *MESW*, p. 100.

53. T/E: In the introduction to *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 137.

54. T/E: From *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman, 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), p. 73. I have translated Castoriadis literally. Eastman's English translation reads, "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."

55. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *MECW*, vol. 5, p. 313.

56. T/E: Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *MESW*, p. 44.

57. T/E: From the "Provisional Rules" written by Marx and adopted by the First International, in *The First International and After*, vol. 3 of Karl Marx, *Political Writings*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Penguin/New Left Books, 1974), p. 82.

58. To take only two examples: What is sociologically true and important in the "labor theory of value" was long common knowledge among English workers. "Capital, I can make out to be nothing else but an accumulation of the products of labour. . . . Labour is always carried to market by those who have nothing else to keep or to sell, and who, therefore, must part with it immediately. . . . These two distinctions between the nature of labour and capital (viz., that labour is always sold by the poor, and always bought by the rich, and that labour cannot by any possibility be stored, but must be every instant sold or every instant lost) are sufficient to convince me that labour and capital can never with justice be subjected to the same laws" (deposition of a Manchester silk-weaver, before the Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers' Petitions, 1835, cited from Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 328–29). Also: "The circumstances of the workmen do not in the least depend on the prosperity or profits of the masters, but on the power of the workmen to *command*—nay to *extort* a high price for their labour" (*Gorgon* [review], November 21, 1818, cited from Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 850). This is somewhat excessive—but less false than Marx's theory of wages. As for politics: "[T]he working classes, if they will but exert themselves *man*fully, have no need to solicit the smallest assistance from any *other* class, but have within themselves . . . superabundant resources" (letter probably from an artisan, published by the Owenite journal, *Economist*, October 13, 1821; March 9, 1822;

Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 868). Bronterre O'Brien wrote in 1833 in the *Poor Man's Guardian* that a spirit of combination had grown up whose object "is the sublimest that can be conceived, namely—to establish for the productive classes a complete domination over the fruits of their own industry. . . . An entire change in society—a change amounting to a complete subversion of the existing 'order of the world'—is contemplated by the working classes. They aspire to be at the top instead of at the bottom of society—or rather that there should be no bottom or top at all" (Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 833). "A member of the Builder's Union" wrote in 1833, "The Trades Unions will not only strike for less work, and more wages, but they will ultimately ABOLISH WAGES, become their own masters, and work for each other." And, in 1834, the journal *Pioneer* defined a political outlook for the unions, which involved the setting up of a House of Trades "which must supply the place of the present House of Commons, and direct the commercial [i.e., economic—*C.C.*] affairs of the country, according to the will of the trades which compose associations of the industry. This is the ascendancy scale by which we arrive to universal suffrage. It will begin in our lodges, extend to our general union, embrace the management of trade, and finally swallow up the whole political power" (Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 912–13).

59. On all these points relating to this phase of the English workers' movement, see Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class.*

60. See Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 207ff.

61. On all these points, see *CS III* and the second and third parts of "Le Mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne," *S. ou B.*, 32 (April 1961) and 33 (December 1961); *MRCM* is reprinted in *CMR 2*, pp. 47–258. [T/E: *MCR* is translated in *PSW 2*, pp. 226–315.]

62. See "Les Rapports de production en Russie," *S. ou B.*, 2 (May 1949); *RPR* is reprinted in *SB 1*, pp. 205–81 [T/E: translated in *PSW 1*, pp. 107–58].

63. On these economic and general effects, see *MCR I, II,* and *III*. On the determination of the evolutionary path of technology by the struggle at the point of production, see *CS II* and *III*. On the struggle at the point of production in Eastern-bloc countries, see "The Proletarian Revolution against the Bureaucracy" and *CS III*, in *PSW 2*.

64. As we know, Marx extracts and abstracts the half corresponding to *the activity of the capitalist* ("closing of pores in the working day"), thus allowing the worker to appear as pure passive object of this activity. The resistance the worker may show *at the point of production* (and not outside the factory, through trade-union activity) does not, from this standpoint, differ from that of some inert material. Marx's moral indignation is present in each line, but the logic of his study is the one that would be applied to a thing. Twice, workers' "resistance" is mentioned in the first book of *Capital* (apropos of supervision and surveillance, and apropos of piece-wages); both times it is presented as inevitably doomed to failure.

65. See "Wildcat Strikes in the American Automobile Industry," in *PSW 2*.

66. On the question of working conditions, see in addition to the text mentioned in the previous note the last section of *MCR*.

67. See *MCR I* and *II*.

68. T/E: *The Holy Family*, p. 37; citation slightly altered to include a translation of "*se représentent.*"

69. For a discussion of these factors, see *CS II* and *III* and *MCR II*.

70. *SB 1*, pp. 115–30. [T/E: This article, "Phénoménologie de la conscience prolétarienne" (March 1948), has not been translated for the present series.]

71. Claude Lefort has, for his part, used the idea of experience, taken in a broader sense, in a remarkable text, "L'Expérience prolétarienne," *S. ou B.*, 11 (March 1953), reprinted in *Eléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* (Geneva: Droz, 1971), pp. 39–58. [T/E: This article appears on pp. 71–97 of the 1979 Gallimard (Paris) edition of this book.]

72. On this evolution, and the multiple factors that have conditioned it, see *MCR* and *RR*.

73. See *CS I* and *II*, *PO I*, *RR*, *RIB/RBI*, *MTR/MRT*, and *IG/GI*.

13
Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes

1. For several years, and especially since 1968, the idea of *self-management* [*autogestion*], of the effective management of production by the collectivity of producers, has ceased to be a "utopian" conception upheld by a few individuals and tiny groups [*groupuscules*] and has become the object of frequent and passionate public debate, as well as the programmatic position of such a large and important trade-union organization as the CFDT.[1] It has reached the point where those who were its most inveterate adversaries have gradually been reduced to defensive postures ("It isn't possible right away," "Not completely," "That depends on what one means by it," or "A few experiments could be tried," etc.).

One day it will no doubt be necessary to study the reasons for this change. For the time being, let it be noted that we encounter here once again the fate reserved for innovative ideas in all fields, and quite particularly those in the domain of society and politics. Adversaries of an idea begin by affirming that it is absurd; they go on to say that everything depends on the meaning one gives to it; and they end up affirming that they had always been warm supporters. One should never lose sight of the fact that such "acceptance" in words is one of the best means of eliminating an idea's contagious effects. If those who, just yesterday, were its inveterate enemies now adopt it and take upon themselves the responsibility for "implementing" it, one can be sure that in the great majority of cases, and whatever their intentions, the result will be to emasculate it in practice. Contemporary society proves here its unparalleled virtuosity in the art of coopting and sidetracking ideas.

Originally published as "La Hiérarchie des salaires et des revenus," *CFDT Aujourd'hui*, 5 (January-February 1974). Reprinted in *EMO 2*, pp. 427–44. [T/E: I have on occasion consulted "Hierarchy of Salaries and Incomes," trans. Tom McLaughlin and Peter Royle, *Catalyst*, 13 (Spring 1979). An earlier version of Tom McLaughlin's translation appeared in *Red Menace*, 3:1 (Winter 1977).]

In the case of self-management, however, other important factors have facilitated the "welcome" this idea seems to be receiving among those whose social situation does not in the least predestine the "interest" (in both senses of the term) they have shown for it, for example, certain factory directors and political personalities. These factors are related to the profound crisis through which the modern industrial system, its organization of labor, and its corresponding techniques are now passing. On the one hand, it is becoming more and more difficult to convince laboring people to accept compartmentalized, degrading tasks lacking all interest. On the other hand, long ago a division of labor pushed to the point of absurdity, Taylorism, and an attempt to fix in advance the tiniest details of a worker's movements, the better to control them, had already reached and gone beyond the point of optimality from the business firm's own point of view; these procedures are now creating an enormous potential for losses at the same time that they are exacerbating the daily conflict between laboring people and the representatives of the system that is imposed on them—a conflict that is exploding more and more often in broad daylight, for example with strikes over "working conditions." Business firms are coming to realize that they no longer are able to attenuate this conflict merely by granting wage increases. As dreams of the complete automation of work collapse, these firms are led to envision the introduction of a few partial modifications in the organization of work, whence the projects and experiments around "job enrichment," autonomy of work teams, and so forth.

Opinions may vary as to the true meaning and the possible results of these efforts. Two things, however, are certain. On the one hand, a process of this kind, once unleashed, could very well take on a momentum of its own, for it is not altogether certain that this dynamic could be controlled by today's business and governmental leaders. On the other hand, the present-day organization of society sets very precise limits on such efforts. There could be no question of affecting the power of the firm's managerial apparatus, that is to say, of the hierarchized bureaucracy that today, in any business firm of significant size, carries out the real functions of bossing people around. And still less could there be a question of challenging the existing power in society, without whose change any modification within the business firm would have only a very limited significance.

In any case, there is for the time being only one way to combat the established system's cooptation and sidetracking of the idea of self-management. That is to allow the least possible vagueness, to draw out all the consequences. It is only in this way that one can bring out the difference separating the idea of a collective management of production by the producers—and of society by all men and women—from its empty and deceitful caricatures.

2. Now, in all these discussions about self-management, it is as a matter of fact characteristic that a fundamental aspect of the present-day organization of the business firm and of society is hardly ever mentioned—namely, *hierarchy*, whether it be of power and command or the economic hierarchy of wages and incomes. As soon as one begins to envision self-management beyond the limits of the work team, however, the hierarchy of power and command as presently constituted in the business firm is necessarily put into question, and, by way of consequence, the hierarchy of wages, too. For the idea that an effective and genuine self-management of the busi-

ness firm by the collectivity of producers could coexist with the present-day power and command structure is a contradiction in terms. What signification, indeed, could one grant to the term *self-management of the business firm* if there continued to exist the same pyramid of command posts whereby a minority of managers [*dirigeants*], of different grades, *manage* [*gère*] the labor of the majority of producers, who themselves are reduced to carrying out simple tasks of execution? In what sense could workers effectively manage production and the business firm if a managerial apparatus separate from them retained decision-making power in its hands? And above all, how could the workers manifest an active interest in the life and workings of the business firm, feel truly concerned by and responsible for everything that happens there, and think that it really is their business—for, without that, every attempt at self-management is doomed to collapse from within—if, on the one hand, they are condemned to a passive role because of the maintenance of a managerial apparatus that makes all the final decisions on its own and if, on the other hand, the persistence of economic inequalities persuades them that, ultimately, the workings of the business firm are not their business, since the profit goes mostly to a tiny portion of the personnel?

Likewise, but on a vaster scale, since the workings of the business firm depend in a thousand ways on the workings of the economy and of society as a whole, it is completely unclear how self-management in the business firm could acquire any genuine content unless the collective organs of the producers and of the population themselves were to assume those functions of coordination and general orientation that at present are in the hands of the people who wield political and economic power.

3. Of course, the existence of a hierarchy of command, of wages, and of incomes is today "justified" by a host of arguments. Before discussing them on their own, it must be noted that these arguments very clearly are *ideological* in character: they are made in order to justify, with an only apparent logic, a reality to which they are only remotely related, and they are formulated on the basis of presuppositions that themselves are never brought to light. Let us also note that these arguments are suffering the effects of what also has been happening for decades to society's official ideology as a whole. This ideology is decomposing before our very eyes; it no longer can present a coherent face to the world, it no longer dares to invoke values no one now accepts, and it is unable to invent other ones. The result is a host of contradictions: thus, for example, have we arrived in France, in the name of Gaullist "participation," at the absolute and uncontrolled power of the president of the Republic. Thus, too, the arguments invoked to justify hierarchy also contradict each other, or rest on differing and incompatible bases, or ought logically to lead to practical conclusions diametrically opposed to what really happens.

4. The central point of today's official ideology concerning hierarchy is its justification of wage and income hierarchy on the basis of the command hierarchy, which in its turn is defended as resting on a hierarchy or scale of "knowledge" *or* of "qualifications" *or* of "talents" *or* of "responsibilities" *or* of a "shortage" in specialized skills. It will be noticed immediately that these scales neither coincide nor correspond with each other either in logic or in reality: there may be (and there is) a dearth of garbage collectors and a glut of professors; great scientists have no "respon-

sibility," whereas some laboring people possessing very little "knowledge" have daily responsibility for the life and death of hundreds or thousands of persons. Second, every attempt to make a "synthesis" of these different criteria, to "weight" them, is necessarily and inevitably arbitrary. Finally, just as arbitrary and without a shadow of possible justification is the move from such a scale, supposedly established, to actual wage differentials: why is one more year of studies, or one more diploma, worth one hundred dollars more a month, and not ten dollars or one thousand dollars? But let us consider these arguments one by one.

5. It is said that the command and wage hierarchy is justified by and founded on a hierarchy or scale of knowledge. In a business firm (or in society) today, however, those who have the most "knowledge" are not those who are in command or who obtain the highest salaries. True, the upper echelons of the hierarchy are recruited especially among those who have "diplomas." However, beyond the fact that it would be ridiculous to identify knowledge with diplomas, it is not those with "the most knowledge" that ascend the command and wage ladder, but rather those most adept at competing in the struggles that unfold within the business firm's managerial bureaucracy. An industrial firm is practically never directed by the most "learned" of its engineers; that person is usually confined to a research bureau. And on the societal level, we know that scientists, great or not, have no power and are paid only a small fraction of what the head of an average business firm is paid. Neither in the firm nor in society do power and high incomes go today to those who "have the greatest knowledge"; power and money are in the hands of a bureaucracy, within which promotion has nothing to do with "knowledge," or "technical abilities," but is determined rather by the ability to survive the struggles between cliques and clans (an ability of no economic and social value, save for those who possess it) and by one's connections with big capital (in Western countries) or with the ruling political party (in Eastern countries).

6. What has just been said goes to show as well what ought to be made of the argument used to justify hierarchy on the basis of differences in people's "abilities." When one considers the wage and power differences that really matter—not those between a semiskilled worker and a tool maker, but those between manual workers on the one hand and top management on the other—it is clear that what is "rewarded" is not the ability to do a job well, but the ability to bet on the right horse. The official ideology also claims, however, that wage hierarchy corresponds to a quite specific ability, the ability to direct, to "manage," to "organize," or even to "conceive and sell a product." Nevertheless, it is evident that these "abilities" have meaning only in relation to the present-day system and only within its context. The "ability to direct," such as it is presently understood, has meaning and value only for a system that separates and opposes executants to directors—those who work and those who direct the work of others. It is the present-day organization of the business firm and of society that brings into existence a "managerial" function separated from the collectivity of producers and standing in opposition to these producers, and that also has need of this function. The same thing is true for "scientific management" [*organisation du travail*]. It also goes for this "ability to conceive and sell a product," for it is only to the extent that production today increasingly depends on the artificial

fabrication of "needs" and the manipulation of consumers that such a function, and the corresponding "ability," have any meaning and value.

In the second place, within the business firm today these functions are no longer carried out by individuals. Apparatuses of greater and greater size are becoming more and more impersonal. These apparatuses are now charged with the task of "organizing" work and production, with advertising and sales, and even with the most important decisions concerning the functioning and the future of the business firm (investments, new manufacturing processes, etc.). Most important of all, indeed, is that in a large modern business enterprise—as well as in the State—*no one* really directs: decisions are made at the end of a process so complex, impersonal, and anonymous that it is in most cases impossible to say *who* decided *what when.* We must add that, within the company's managerial apparatus (as is also the case with other contemporary institutions, including the State), there is an enormous difference between the manner in which things are supposed to occur and the manner in which they actually do occur, between the *formal* and the *real* decision-making procedure, just as on the shop floor there is an enormous difference between the manner in which workers are supposed to do their work and the manner in which they manage to do so in reality. Formally, something or other is supposed to be decided during a meeting of some administrative committee; in reality, the decision has already been made behind the scenes before the meeting even started, or else it will later be modified by those who actually have to carry it out.

7. Arguments justifying hierarchy on the basis of responsibilities carry no more weight than the others we have examined. We must start by asking, In what cases can responsibility be localized and, should the case arise, sanctioned? Given the increasingly collective character of production and of activities in modern society, these cases are ultrarare and are encountered, as a general rule, only at the lowest echelons of the hierarchy: a gate-keeper at a level crossing supposedly responsible for a train accident will always be punished, but it is out of the question that those really responsible for the recent fire at the Edouard-Pailleron secondary school will be punished (in fact, it is practically impossible to find them), the "responsibility" here having already been so diluted into thousands of administrative files on the case. And who has been "punished" for the millions wasted in the La Villette slaughterhouse scandal? Here again, there is no relationship between the logic of the argument and what actually happens. A railway-crossing guard or an air-traffic controller has in his hands the lives of several hundred people a day, yet he is paid many times less than a tenth of the salary of the CEO of the national railway line or of Air France, who has no one's life in his hands.

8. The argument according to which wage hierarchy is explained and justified by the relative scarcity of different skills or types of work hardly merits serious discussion. Such scarcity, when it does exist, can drive to a higher level than before the pay of a category of workers for a shorter or longer period of time, but an increase of this kind in the pay rate will never extend beyond certain narrow limits. Whatever the relative "scarcity" of semiskilled workers and the relative "glut" of lawyers, the latter group will always be paid much more than the former.

9. Not only do these arguments fail to hold logically and to correspond to what really happens, but they are mutually incompatible. Even if they were taken seri-

ously, the wage scale corresponding to "knowledge" (or rather to diplomas) would still be completely different from the one corresponding to "responsibilities," and so on. When a "job evaluation" is conducted, present-day systems of remuneration, it is claimed, make a "synthesis" of the alleged factors entering into pay decisions. However, such a synthesis is a gross mystification: one can neither truly measure each factor taken separately nor add them up, save in an arbitrary way (with "weightings" corresponding to no objective element). It is already absurd to measure knowledge by diplomas (whatever the quality of those diplomas and of the system of education). It is impossible to compare "responsibilities," save in banal and uninteresting cases: there are engineers of passenger trains and of freight trains, but how many tons of coal is a human life worth? Hare-brained measurements established for each of these factors are then "added together," like apples and oranges, with the aid of weighted coefficients corresponding to nothing but the imagination of those who invent them.

The best illustration of the mystificatory character of this system is provided by the very results of its application. On the one hand, one would have thought that, coming after two centuries of "nonscientific" setting of wages in industry, job evaluations would have provoked an upheaval in the existing pay structure; indeed, it is hard to believe that, without knowing why, companies have already been applying the pay scales that, miraculously, corresponded to what this new "science" was going to discover. Now, the changes resulting from the application of the new method have in fact been minute—which goes to show that the method has been adjusted in such a way as to disturb the present system to the least extent possible, while providing it with a pseudoscientific justification. On the other hand, the introduction of job evaluations has done nothing to diminish the intensity of conflicts over absolute and relative pay levels that daily occupy the life of companies.

10. More generally, we could never insist strongly enough on the duplicity and bad faith of all these justifications, which are always invoking factors relating to the nature of *work* in order to provide a foundation for differences in wages and incomes—despite the fact that by far the *least* important differences are those among *laboring people* and the *most* important ones are those between the mass of laboring people, on the one hand, and the various categories of *managers*, on the other (whether they be economic managers or political "leaders"). The official ideology thereby obtains at least one result: contrary to all reason and against their own interests, laboring people themselves attach as much and even more importance to the minimal differences existing among themselves than to the enormous differences separating them from the upper strata of the hierarchy. We will return to this question later.

11. All this concerns what we have called the *ideology* of justification for hierarchy. There also exists an apparently more "respectable" discourse, that of academic or Marxist economic science. We cannot here undertake to refute it in detailed fashion. Let us say summarily that, for the academic economist, the wage is supposed to correspond to the "marginal product of work," that is to say, to what the hour of work of one additional worker "adds" to the product (or, what boils down to the same thing, to what would be subtracted from the product if one worker were to be removed from production). Without entering into the theoretical discussion of

this conception in general—its untenability can easily be proved—its absurdity can immediately be shown in the case of interest to us here, that of the differentiation of pay for different skills from the moment there is a division of labor and an interdependence of different jobs, which is the case generally in modern industry. If, in a coal-fired locomotive, the train's engineer is eliminated, one does not "reduce a little" of the product (transportation), one eliminates it completely; and the same thing is true if one eliminates the fireman. The "product" of this indivisible team of engineer and fireman obeys a law of all or nothing, and there is no "marginal product" of the one that can be separated from that of the other. The same thing goes on the shop floor, and ultimately for the modern factory as a whole, where jobs are closely interdependent.

For Marxist economics, on the other hand, wages are to be determined by the "law of labor value"; that is to say, they would in fact be equivalent to the cost of producing and reproducing this commodity that is, under capitalism, labor power. Consequently, differences in wages between unskilled labor and skilled labor would have to correspond to the differences in training costs of these two categories (the main part of which is represented by the maintenance of future workers during their "unproductive" years of apprenticeship). It can easily be calculated that, on this basis, differences in pay could hardly exceed a 1:2 ratio (between labor absolutely devoid of all skill and that requiring ten or fifteen years of preparatory training). Now, in real life such differences greatly exceed that level, both in Western countries and in Eastern ones (where wage hierarchy is practically as overt as it is in the West).

We must emphasize, moreover, that, even if academic or Marxist theory offered an *explanation* of wage differentiations, they would in any case be unable to furnish a *justification* for them. For, in both cases, the existence of different skills is accepted, left undiscussed as a *given* beyond debate, whereas in fact it is only the *result* of the overall economic and social system and of its continued reproduction. If skilled labor is "worth" more, it would be, for example, in the Marxist view, because the family of this laborer has spent more for his training (and, theoretically, has to "recoup the costs"—which in practice signifies that the skilled worker will be able in his turn to finance the training of his children, etc.). Why, however, has this family been able to spend more—something that other families were not able to do? Because it was already privileged from the standpoint of income. All that these "explanations" say, therefore, strictly speaking, is that if a hierarchical differentiation exists at the outset, it will perpetuate itself by means of this mechanism. Let us add that if it is no longer the worker himself or his family but society that assumes these training costs (as is becoming more and more often the case), there is no reason for the person who has already benefited, at society's cost, from professional training guaranteeing him a more interesting and less arduous job to profit a second time around in the form of a higher income.

12. The genuine problem posed by the problem of command and wage hierarchy has not been touched by these discussions, which are, rather, a smoke screen hiding the real problem. The true issue concerns very deep-seated sociological and psychological factors that determine individuals' attitudes toward hierarchical structures. This is no secret to anyone, and there is no reason to hide it: we encounter among many laboring people an acceptance and even an appreciation of hierarchy just as

strong as those that exist among the privileged strata of society. It is even doubtful that laboring people on the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder are more opposed to hierarchy than others (the real overall situation is obviously of a great complexity and varies over time). We should also ask ourselves seriously about the reasons for this state of affairs. That would require a long and difficult study, which quite obviously should be undertaken with the greatest participation possible on the part of laboring people themselves. Here, we can only jot down a few reflections.

13. It can always be said that the official ideology of hierarchy long ago penetrated the laboring classes, which is true. Still, we must ask ourselves how and why this ideology has succeeded in this way since, as we know, at its origins and long afterward, in France as well as in England, the workers' movement was very highly egalitarian. It is also true that, in any case, the capitalist system would not have been able to continue to function, and, above all, would not have been able to take on its modern bureaucratic form, had not the hierarchical structure not only been accepted but "appreciated" and "interiorized"; a nonnegligible portion of the population had to agree to play this game full out for this game to be playable. Why do so many people play this game? In part, no doubt, because, in the contemporary system, the sole "meaning of existence" [*raison de vivre*] society is capable of proposing, the only bait it has to offer, is consumerism, therefore an income, one that is higher. To the extent that people take this bait—and for the moment, almost everyone seems to be taking it—to the extent, too, that illusions of "upward mobility" and "promo~~tion," as well as the reality of economic growth, disclose to them higher echelons~~ to which they can aspire and at which they can hope to arrive, they attach lesser importance to income differences than they perhaps would in a static situation. It is tempting to relate this factor to what should be called a willingness to delude oneself about the real size of differences in wages, a willingness seemingly manifested by the majority of the population; recent studies have revealed that people underestimate to a fantastic degree the real income differences extant in France.

There also undoubtedly is, however, a deeper factor, one more difficult to formulate, which plays the principal role in this affair. The triumph of the gradual bureaucratization of society has been at the same time, and necessarily, the triumph of an imaginary representation of society—one in which everyone more or less participates—as pyramid or system of hierarchical pyramids. To be blunt, it seems, so to speak, impossible for contemporary man to represent to himself a society in which individuals would be genuinely *equal* in their rights and duties, in which differences between individuals would correspond to something other than differences in their positions on a scale of command and income. And this is related to the fact that each person cannot *represent himself to himself*, be something in his own eyes (or, as psychoanalysts would say, establish his "sense of identity" [*repères identificatiores*]), except in terms of the place he occupies in a hierarchical structure, be it even at one of its lowest rungs. Pushing things to their limit, one can say that here we find the sole means contemporary bureaucratic-capitalist society leaves open for each person to feel that he *is* someone, something fairly determinate—since all other determinations, all other moorings, all bearings [*repères*] are more and more being emptied of their content. In a society where work has become absurd in its objectives and in the way it is performed, where there are no longer any genuine living collec-

tivities, where the family is shriveling down and breaking up, where everything is becoming standardized by the mass media and the race to consume, the system is able to offer people, as a way of masking the emptiness of the life it makes for them, only the ridiculous bauble of the place they occupy on the hierarchical pyramid. It is therefore less than incomprehensible that many cling to it, and that occupational and professional rivalries are far from disappearing.

These factors and these attitudes therefore ought also to be examined if we wish—as we should—to put forward a radical critique of hierarchy. And it is within this perspective that we should try to see to what extent, already today, this hierarchical representation of society is not beginning to wear out and to be put into question, in particular by the young.

Note

1. T/E: The *Confédération française démocratique du travail* is the socialist-allied trade-union confederation in France.

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Self-Management and Hierarchy

Whether in work, production, the business firm; in administration, politics, the State; or in education and scientific research, we live in a society whose organization is *hierarchical*. Hierarchy is not an invention of modern society. Its origins reach far back in time—though it has not always existed, and there have been nonhierarchical societies that have functioned quite well. In modern society, however, the hierarchical (or, what boils down to nearly the same thing, bureaucratic) system has become practically universal. As soon as there is any collective activity, it is organized according to the hierarchical principle, and the hierarchy of command and power coincides more and more with the hierarchy of wages and incomes. The result is that people almost never succeed in imagining that things could be otherwise, or that they themselves could be something definite except in terms of the place they occupy in the hierarchical pyramid.

The defenders of the present-day system try to justify it as the sole "logical," "rational," "economical" one. We have already tried to show that these "arguments" have no validity and justify nothing, that they are false when taken separately and contradictory when considered together.[1] We will have occasion to return to them later. The current system is also presented, however, as the sole one possible, allegedly imposed on us by the necessities of modern production, the complexity of social life, the grand scale on which all activities take place today, and so forth. We will try to show that there is nothing of the sort, and that the existence of a hierarchy is radically incompatible with self-management.

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Self-Management and Command Hierarchy

Collective Decision and the Problem of Representation

Socially speaking, what does the hierarchical system signify? That one stratum of the population directs society and that the others only execute its decisions; also, that this stratum, which receives a larger income, profits from the production and the work of society much more than the others. In brief, it may be said that society is divided between a stratum that has power and privileges at its disposal, and the rest, which is dispossessed of these. The hierarchization—or bureaucratization—of all social activities is today only the (increasingly preponderant) form of the division of society. As such, it is both result and cause of the conflict tearing through society.

If that is so, it becomes ridiculous to ask, Is self-management, is the functioning and the existence of a self-managed system, compatible with the maintenance of hierarchy? It is the same as asking whether the suppression of the present-day penitentiary system is compatible with the maintenance of prison officers, head guards, and prison wardens. As one knows, however, what goes without saying goes still better being said. All the more so in this case, since for millennia it has been driven into people's heads from childhood onward that it is "natural" for some to command and for others to obey, for some to have too much and for others not to have enough of the necessities of life.

We want a self-managed society. What does that mean?

A self-managed society is a society that manages itself, that is to say, that directs itself on its own. This, however, must be made still more precise. A self-managed society is one in which all decisions are made by the collectivity that, in each case, is concerned by the object of those decisions. That is to say, a system in which those who accomplish an activity decide collectively *what* they have to do and *how* to do it, within the limits outlined solely by their coexistence with other collective units. Thus, decisions concerning people working in a shop ought to be made by those working there; decisions concerning several workshops at once, by the entirety of laboring people concerned or by their elected and revocable delegates; decisions concerning the entire business firm, by all the firm's personnel; those concerning a neighborhood, by its inhabitants; and decisions concerning all of society, by the totality of men and women living there.

But what does deciding signify?

To decide is to decide oneself. It is not to leave the decision to "competent people," subject to some vague "control." Neither is it to designate people who, themselves, are going to decide. It is not by designating once every five years those who will make laws that the French population would make its own laws. It is not by designating once every seven years the person who will decide the country's policy that it would decide itself about that policy. It does not decide; it *alienates* its power of decision to "representatives" who, by this very fact, are not and cannot be *its* representatives. Certainly, the designation of representatives, or of delegates, by different collectivities, as well as the existence of organs—committees or councils—formed by such delegates will be, in a host of cases, indispensable. Such a procedure, however, will not be compatible with self-management unless those delegates

genuinely represent the collectivity from which they emanate, and that implies that they remain subject to its power. That, in its turn, signifies that this collectivity not only elects them but also can revoke them each time it deems that necessary.

Therefore, to say that there is a hierarchy of command made up of "competent people" who are in principle irremovable, or to say that there are "representatives" who are irremovable for a certain specified time period (and who, as experience proves, become practically irremovable thereafter), is to say that there is no self-management, or even "democratic management." It is equivalent in effect to saying that the collectivity is directed by people whose management of common affairs has henceforth become their specialized and exclusive affair, and who, de jure or de facto, are beyond the power of the collectivity.

*Collective Decision, Education [*formation*], and Information*

On the other hand, to decide is to decide *in full knowledge of the relevant facts* [*en connaissance de cause*]. It is no longer the collectivity that decides, even if formally it "votes," if someone or some ones alone have information at their disposal and define the criteria on the basis of which a decision is made. This signifies that those who decide have to have *all* the relevant information at their disposal. It also means, however, that they are able to define for themselves criteria on the basis of which they decide. To do that, they have to have an increasingly broad *education*. Now, a command hierarchy implies that those who decide possess—or rather, claim to possess—a monopoly on information and education and, in any case, have privileged access thereto. Hierarchy is based on this fact, and it constantly tends to reproduce itself. For in a hierarchical organization all information rises from the base to the summit and does not redescend, or circulate (in fact, information does circulate, but it does so *against* the rules of hierarchical organization). In addition, all decisions descend from the summit to the base, which itself is charged merely with executing them. This boils down pretty much to saying that there is a command hierarchy and that these two patterns of information traffic [*circulations*] each flow only one way: the summit collects and absorbs all the information rising toward it, and it sends back to the executants only the minimum strictly necessary for the execution of orders it addresses to them, orders that emanate from it alone. In such a situation, it is absurd to think that there could be any self-management, or even "democratic management."

How can one decide if one does not have at one's disposal the information necessary really to decide? And how can one *learn to* decide if one is always reduced to executing what others have decided? As soon as a command hierarchy is established [*s'instaure*], the collectivity becomes opaque for itself, and enormous waste is introduced. It becomes opaque because the information is retained at the summit. Waste is introduced because uninformed or ill-informed laboring people do not know what they should know in order to carry out their jobs, and especially because the collective capacities for self-direction, as well as inventiveness and initiative, which are formally reserved for those in command, are hindered and inhibited at all levels.

Therefore, to want self-management—or even "democratic management," if the

word democracy is not used simply for decorative purposes—and to want to maintain a command hierarchy is a contradiction in terms. It would be much more consistent, on the formal level, to say, as the defenders of the present-day system actually do, that the command hierarchy is indispensable and that, therefore, a self-managed society cannot exist.

Only, that is false. When one examines the functions of hierarchy, that is to say, what purpose it serves, one notices that in large part these functions have meaning and exist only as a function of the present-day social system, and that others, those that would remain meaningful and useful in a self-managed social system, could easily be collectivized. We will not, within this short text, discuss the question in its full breadth. We will try to shed light on some of its more important features, making specific reference to the organization of the business firm and of production.

One of the most important functions of the present-day hierarchy is *to organize compulsion* [*contrainte*]. In work, for example, whether on the shop floor or in the office, an essential part of the "activity" of the hierarchical apparatus, from foremen to managerial personnel, consists of surveillance, control, sanctions, a direct or indirect imposition of discipline, and assurance of the execution of the orders given to those who are to execute them. And why *is it necessary* to organize compulsion? Why is it necessary *that there be* compulsion? Because laboring people do not in general spontaneously manifest any overwhelming enthusiasm to do what management wants them to do. And why is that? Because neither their work nor the product of their work belongs to them, because they feel alienated and exploited, because they have not themselves decided what they are to do and how to do it, or what will come of what they do; in brief, because there is a perpetual conflict between those who work and those who direct the work of others and profit from it. In sum, therefore, it is necessary that there be a hierarchy in order to organize compulsion—and it is necessary that there be compulsion because there is division and conflict, that is to say as well, because there is hierarchy.

Hierarchy is presented in more general terms as being there to settle conflicts. Here one masks the fact that hierarchy is itself the source for a perpetual conflict. For, as long as there is a hierarchical system, there will be, for this very reason, the continual rebirth of a radical conflict between a privileged managerial stratum and the other categories, who have been reduced to roles of execution.

It is said that if there were no compulsion, there would be no discipline, that each person would do what he pleases, and that chaos would ensue. This, however, is another sophism. The question is not whether there must be discipline and sometimes even compulsion, but *what kind* of discipline, decided by whom, controlled by whom, under what forms, and for what ends. The more the ends discipline serves are foreign to the needs and desires of those who are to carry them out, the more the decisions concerning these ends and the forms of discipline are external to them, and the more there is need for compulsion in order to win respect for these decisions and forms of discipline.

A self-managed collectivity is not a collectivity without discipline, but a collectivity that decides itself how to organize its self-discipline and, should the case arise, the sanctions against those who deliberately violate this discipline. As concerns work in particular, the question cannot be discussed seriously if one presents the

self-managed firm as strictly identical to the contemporary business firm save for the removal of its hierarchical shell. In the business firm today, one imposes on people jobs that are foreign to them and about which they have no say. The astonishing thing is not that they are opposed to this, but that they are not infinitely more opposed than is the case. It cannot be believed for a single instant that their attitude toward their work would remain the same when their relation to it would be transformed and when they would begin to become the masters of it. On the other hand, even in a business firm today, there is not *one* form of discipline, but *two*. There is the discipline the hierarchical apparatus constantly tries to impose through the application of constraints and the use of monetary or other sanctions. And there is the much less apparent, but no less effective, discipline that arises within groups of laboring people in a work team or in a shop; this second sort of discipline acts, for example, so as to tolerate neither those who work too much nor those who work too little. Human groups have never been and never are chaotic conglomerates of individuals moved solely by egoism and engaged in war with each other, as the ideologues of capitalism and of the bureaucracy, who are expressing here merely their own mentality, would have us believe. In groups, and in particular those occupied with an ongoing shared task, norms of behavior and collective pressure to win respect for these norms always arise.

Self-Management, Competence, and Decision Making

Let us now proceed to the other essential function of hierarchy, which appears to be independent of the contemporary social structure: the functions of decision making and direction. The question that arises is the following: Why are the collectivities themselves not able to accomplish this function, to direct themselves, and to decide for themselves; why would it be necessary for there to be a particular stratum of people, organized in a separate apparatus, that decides and directs? In answer to this question, the defenders of the present-day system provide two sorts of responses. One leans on the invocation of "knowledge" and "competence": those who know, those who are competent, are to decide. The other response states, in more or less covert terms, that in any case someone has to decide, because otherwise there would be chaos—in other words, because the collectivity is incapable of directing itself.

No one challenges the importance of knowledge and competence, nor, above all, the fact that today, *a certain knowledge* and *a certain competence* are reserved for a minority. Nevertheless, here again such facts are invoked to cover over sophisms. It is not those who have more knowledge and competence in general that direct in the present-day system. Those who direct are those who have shown themselves capable of rising within the hierarchical apparatus, or those who, in terms of their family and social origin, have been given the breaks after having obtained a few diplomas. In both cases, the "competence" required to maintain oneself or to rise within the hierarchical apparatus is concerned much more with the ability to defend oneself and to come out on top in the competition among individuals, cliques, and clans within the bureaucratic-hierarchical apparatus than with any aptitude for directing collective work. In the second place, just because someone or some ones

possess some scientific or technical knowledge or competency does not mean that the best way to use them is to confer on them the management of a set of activities. One can be an excellent engineer in one's specialized field without for all that being capable of "directing" a whole department in the factory. Moreover, we need only notice what really happens in this regard. Technicians and specialists are generally confined to their particular field. "Managers" surround themselves with a few technical consultants, gather their advice on the decisions to be made (advice that often contains divergent opinions), and finally "decide." The absurdity of the argument here is clear. If the "manager" decided as a function of his "knowledge" and his "competence," he would have to be knowledgeable and competent about everything, either directly or in order to decide which, among the divergent opinions of the specialists, is the best. That obviously is impossible, and managers in fact settle things arbitrarily, by exercising their "judgment." Now, this "judgment" by a single person has no more reason to be valid than the judgment that would be formed in a self-managed collectivity on the basis of a real experience infinitely broader than that of a single individual.

Self-Management, Specialization, and Rationality

Knowledge and competence are by definition specialized, and they are becoming more so with each passing day. Removed from his specific field, the technician or specialist is no more capable than anyone else of making a good decision. Even within his particular field, indeed, his point of view is inevitably limited. On the one hand, he does not know the other fields, which necessarily interact with his own, and he tends naturally to neglect them. Thus, in business firms as in administrative offices today the question of the "horizontal" coordination of managerial services is a perpetual nightmare. It long ago reached the point where specialists of coordination had to be created in order to coordinate the activities of management specialists—who have thereby shown themselves incapable of managing themselves. On the other hand and above all, when specialists are placed in a managerial apparatus they are for this very reason separated from the real production process, from what goes on there, from the conditions under which laboring people have to carry out their work. Most of the time, the decisions made in offices [*bureaux*] on the basis of scientific calculations, though perfect on paper, prove inapplicable such as they are, for they have not adequately taken into account the real conditions under which they will have to be applied. Now, by definition, the collectivity of laboring people *alone* knows these real conditions. Everyone knows that, in business firms today, this is a source for perpetual conflicts and enormous waste.

On the other hand, knowledge and competence can be rationally utilized if those who possess them are reintegrated into the collectivity of producers, if they become one of the components of the decision-making of this collectivity. Self-management requires cooperation between those who possess a particular sort of knowledge and competence and those who perform productive labor in the strict sense. It is totally incompatible with a separation of those two categories. Only if such cooperation is established [*s'instaure*] will this knowledge and this competence be able to be utilized to their full extent. Today, however, these skills and abilities are utilized only in

small part, for those who possess them are confined to limited tasks narrowly circumscribed by the division of labor established within the managerial apparatus. Above all, this cooperation alone can ensure that knowledge and competence will actually be placed in the service of the collectivity, and not for particular ends.

Could such cooperation occur without conflicts arising between "specialists" and other laboring people? If a specialist states, on the basis of his specialized knowledge, that this or that metal, because it possesses such and such properties, is the most suitable for this tool or that part, one does not see why and on what basis that would lead to gratuitous objections on the workers' part. Even in this case, moreover, a rational decision requires that the workers not be left out—for example, because the properties of the material chosen play a role in the machining of the parts or tools. The truly important decisions concerning production always include, however, a dimension that is central *to the role and to the place of people in production.* Thereupon, there exists—by definition—no knowledge and no competence that might take precedence over the point of view of those who will actually have to carry out the work. An assembly-line organization can be neither rational nor acceptable if it has been decided on without taking into account the point of view of those who will have to work on it. Because they do not take this viewpoint into account, these decisions are at present almost always handicapped; and if, nonetheless, production somehow continues, it will be because the workers have organized among themselves to keep it going and have transgressed the official rules and instructions about how their work is to be organized. Moreover, even if one were to suppose that these decisions are "rational" from the narrow point of view of productive efficiency, they are still unacceptable precisely because they are, and can only be, based exclusively on the principle of "productive efficiency." This means that they tend to subordinate laboring people completely to the manufacturing process. Now, that is due not to the maliciousness of management, to its stupidity, or even simply to the quest for profit. (The proof is that "labor organization" is strictly the same in the Eastern-bloc countries and in Western countries.) It is the direct and inevitable consequence of a system in which the decisions are made by people other than those who will have to carry them out; such a system *cannot* have another "logic."

A self-managed society, however, cannot follow this "logic." Its logic is entirely other; it is the logic of the liberation of people and of their development. The collectivity of laboring people might very well decide—and, in our opinion, it would be right to do so—that for it, less arduous, less absurd, freer, and more happy workdays are infinitely preferable to a few extra pieces of manufactured junk. For such absolutely fundamental choices, no "scientific" or "objective" criterion holds water: the sole criterion is the judgment of the collectivity itself concerning what it prefers, made on the basis of its experience, its needs, and its desires.

This is true on the societal scale. No "scientific" criterion permits anyone whatsoever to decide that it is preferable for society to have more leisure time next year rather than more consumer goods, or vice versa, more rapid growth or less rapid growth, etc. He who says that such criteria exist is either ignorant or an impostor. The sole criterion that in these domains has any meaning is what the men and the women who make up society want, and they alone can decide what that is; no one can do so in their stead.

Self-Management and Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes

Absence of Objective Criteria for the Establishment of a Pay Hierarchy

A self-managed society is no more compatible with a hierarchy of wages and incomes than it is with a command hierarchy.

First of all, the wage and income hierarchy corresponds at present to the command hierarchy—completely in Eastern-bloc countries, in good part in Western countries. Yet, we must also see how this hierarchy is recruited. A son of a rich person will be a rich person, a son of a manager [*cadre*] will have all the chances in the world to become a manager. Thus, in large part the strata occupying the higher levels of the hierarchical pyramid perpetuate themselves by heredity. And that does not occur by chance. A social system always tends to reproduce itself. If some social strata have privileges, the members thereof will do everything they can—and their privileges signify precisely that they are capable of doing so to a large extent—to transmit these privileges to their descendants. To the extent that, in such a system, these strata have need of "new men"—because the managerial apparatuses are expanding and proliferating—they select, among the offspring of "lower" strata, those deemed most "apt" in order to coopt them within their own strata. To this extent, it may appear that the "work" and the "abilities" of those who have been coopted have played a role in their career, and that their "merits" are being rewarded. Once again, however, "abilities" and "merits" here signify essentially the ability to adapt oneself to the reigning system, the better to serve it. From a self-managed society's point of view, such abilities have no meaning.

Certainly, some people may think that, even in a self- managed society, the most courageous, the most tenacious, the most hard-working, the most "competent" individuals should have the right to a particular "reward," *and* that this reward ought to be monetary. And this nourishes the illusion that there might be a justifiable hierarchy of wages.

This illusion does not resist examination. No more than in the present-day system does one see on what basis differences in pay could be founded logically and justified with figures to back them up. Why should this bit of competence be worth for its possessor four times as much income as that granted to another, and not twice or twelvefold? What sense is there in saying that the competency of a good surgeon is *worth exactly* as much as—or more, or less, than—that of a good engineer? And why is it not worth exactly as much as that of a good train engineer or a good teacher?

Once removed from a few very narrow domains, and stripped of general signification, there are no objective criteria for measuring and comparing the competencies, knowledge, and know-how of different individuals. And if society itself covers the cost for an individual to acquire such know-how—as is practically the case already today—it is unclear why the individual who has already benefited once from the privilege this acquisition constitutes in itself should benefit from it a second time under the form of a higher income. The same thing goes, moreover, for "merit" and "intelligence." There are certainly individuals who are born more gifted than others as regards certain activities, or who become so. These differences are in general small, and the development of such differences especially depends on one's family,

social, and educational setting. But in any case, to the extent that someone has a "gift," the exercise of this "gift" is in itself a source of pleasure when it is not hindered. And as for the rare individuals who are exceptionally gifted, what really matters is not monetary "reward" but creating what they are irresistibly driven to create. If Einstein had been interested in money, he would not have become Einstein—and it is likely that he would have made a rather mediocre boss or financier.

Sometimes the incredible argument is advanced that without a hierarchy of wages society would not be able to find people willing to carry out the most "difficult" functions—and the functions of trained staff person [*cadre*], manager, etc., are presented as such. We are familiar with the oft-repeated phrase of those "in charge": "If everyone earned the same amount, then I would prefer sweeping up." However, in countries like Sweden, where wages differences have become much smaller than in France, business firms do not function less well than in France, and we are not seeing trained staff rushing for the brooms.

What is becoming more and more noticeable in industrialized countries is rather the contrary: those leaving companies are those who occupy the truly most difficult jobs—that is to say, the most arduous and the least interesting. Wage hikes do not succeed in stopping the hemorrhage of personnel in these positions. For this reason, these jobs are being abandoned more and more to immigrant manpower. This phenomenon is to be explained by the obvious fact that, unless forced to do otherwise by poverty, people are increasingly likely to refuse employment in idiotic jobs. One never notices the opposite phenomenon, and one can wager that things will continue in this direction. According to the very logic of this argument we therefore arrive at the following conclusion, namely, that the most interesting jobs are the ones that should be remunerated *the least*. For, no matter what the circumstances, these jobs are the most attractive, that is to say, the motivation for choosing them and for performing them is already to be found, in large part, in the very nature of the work.

Self-Management, Job Motivation, and Production for Needs

But what do all these arguments aimed at justifying hierarchy in a self-managed society boil down to saying? What is the hidden idea lying at their foundation? It is that people choose a job and perform it only in order to earn more than others. Though presented as an eternal truth concerning human nature, this idea in reality expresses merely the capitalist outlook, which has more or less penetrated society (and which, as the persistence of wage hierarchy in Eastern-bloc countries shows, remains dominant there as well). Now, this mentality is one of the conditions for the existence and self-preservation of the present-day system—and conversely, it can exist only insofar as the system continues. People attach importance to income differences *because* such differences exist and because, in the present-day social system, they are regarded as important. If one *can* make ten thousand dollars a month rather than one thousand, and if the social system everywhere nourishes the idea that he who makes ten thousand is *worth* more, *is* better than he who makes only one thousand—then indeed many people (not all, however, not even today) will be motivated to do everything to make ten thousand rather than one thousand. If, however, such a

difference does not exist in the social system, if it is considered to be just as absurd to want to make more than others as we (at least most of us) consider it today absurd to want at all costs to have a title of nobility, then other motivations, which themselves have a true social value, will be able to appear, or rather to open up, for example, interest in the work itself, the pleasure of doing well what one has chosen by oneself to do, inventiveness, creativity, the esteem and the recognition of others. Conversely, as long as that miserable motivation of economic considerations stands, all these other individual motivations will remain atrophied and crippled from infancy onward.

A hierarchical system is based on competition between individuals, and the struggle of all against all. It constantly lines people up against each other, inciting them to use all available means to "rise to the top." To present the cruel and sordid competition that takes place in a hierarchy of power, command, and incomes as a sports competition in which the "best" are winners in an honest game is to take people for imbeciles and to believe that they do not see how things really happen in a hierarchical system, whether it be in the factory, in an office, in the university, and now even more and more in scientific research, since the latter has become an immense bureaucratic enterprise. The existence of hierarchy is based on the merciless struggle of each person against all others—and it exacerbates this struggle. This is, indeed, why the jungle becomes all the more ruthless the higher one rises in the hierarchy—and why one encounters cooperation only at the base, where possibilities for "promotion" are reduced or nonexistent. Moreover, the artificial introduction, by the firm's management, of differentiations at this level aims precisely at breaking up such cooperation. Now, from the moment there are privileges of any kind, but particularly those of an economic nature, competition between individuals is immediately reborn, as is the tendency to cling to the privileges one already possesses and, to this end, to try to acquire as well more power for oneself and to remove it from the control of others. From that moment onward, there can no longer be any question of self-management.

Finally, wage and income hierarchy is equally incompatible with a rational organization of the economy of a self-managed society, for such a hierarchy immediately and heavily falsifies expressions of social demand.

Indeed, a rational organization of a self-managed society's economy implies that, so long as the objects and services produced by society still have a "price"—so long as they cannot be distributed freely—and therefore so long as there is a "market" for individual consumer goods, production will be oriented in accordance with the indicators of this market, that is to say, ultimately by the solvent demand of consumers. For, to begin with, there is no other defensible system. Contrary to a recent slogan, which can receive only metaphorical approval, one cannot give to everyone "everything right away" [*tout et tout de suite*].[2] It would, on the other hand, be absurd to limit consumption by means of authoritarian rationing, which would be equivalent to an intolerable and stupid tyranny over the preferences of each. Why distribute to each person a record and four movie tickets a month, when there are people who prefer music to images, and others who prefer the contrary—not to mention the deaf and the blind? A "market" of individual consumer goods is truly defensible only insofar as it is truly democratic—that is, only if each person's ballot carries the same

weight. These ballots are each person's income. If these incomes are unequal, immediately the vote is rigged: some people's votes would count much more than those of others. Thus today, the "vote" of the rich person for a villa on the Côte d'Azur or a personal airplane carries much more weight than the vote of an ill-housed person for decent housing, or of an unskilled worker for a second-class train ticket. And we must also be aware of the immense impact the unequal distribution of incomes has on the structure of consumer-goods production.

An arithmetical example making no claim to rigor, but which is fairly near to reality in its order of magnitude, allows us to illustrate this point. Suppose one could group the lowest 80 percent of the French population in terms of income around a mean of twenty thousand francs per year after taxes (the lowest incomes in France, which comprise a quite numerous category of people, along with senior citizens who earn little or nothing in the way of a pension, are far below the minimum wage) and the remaining 20 percent around a mean of eighty thousand francs per year after taxes. With a simple calculation, we can see that these two categories would share equal halves of the income available for consumer spending. Under these conditions, a fifth of the population would dispose of as much buying power as the other four-fifths. That means, too, that around 35 percent of the country's production of consumer goods are oriented *exclusively* toward satisfying the demand of the most favored group of the population *after* the satisfaction of the "basic" needs of this group; or again, that 30 percent of *all* persons employed work in order to satisfy the *nonessential* needs of the most favored categories of the population.[a]

We see, therefore, that the orientation the "market" imposes on production under these conditions would not reflect the needs of society, but rather a deformed image in which nonessential consumption of the well-to-do strata would have a disproportionate weight. It is difficult to believe that, in a self-managed society, where these facts would be known by all with exactitude and precision, people would tolerate such a situation; or that, were such conditions still to prevail, they would consider production as their own business, and feel that it concerned them—and without these prerequisites there could not for a minute be any question of self-management.

The abolition of wage hierarchy is therefore the sole means for orienting production in accordance with the needs of the collectivity, for eliminating the struggle of all against all and the economic mentality, and for permitting the true participation of all men and of all women in the management of the collectivity's affairs.

Notes

1. See "Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes," chapter 13 in this volume.

2. T/E: The slogan of "tout, tout de suite" was among those that appeared in May 1968 during the student rebellion in France.

a) Assuming that the consumption/investment ratio is 4:1—which is roughly the order of magnitude observed in reality.

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The Revolutionary Exigency

OLIVIER MONGIN: Cornelius Castoriadis, just a few years ago only a small minority had any suspicion of the importance and originality of your articles in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The republication of your principal political texts, programmatic statements, and manifestos from *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in paperback and the appearance of a particularly dense philosophical work, *L'Institution imaginaire de la société*, were necessary before your work was recognized and entered into the public domain. Nevertheless, it seems that this impromptu discovery has not necessarily facilitated people's access to your thought. Indeed, many knots remain tied for those who have not followed your itinerary.

It is for this reason that we want to ask you what connection there is between the militant activist of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the economist, and the philosopher. Does it make sense to distinguish between them? To pose this question in another way, does your critique of Marxism, for example, lie at the origin of your philosophical critiques? Is your criticism of political representation unrelated to your criticism of classical philosophical representation? In short, we would like to ask you to situate in an organic way what often risks being perceived as a series of merely juxtaposed reflections.

The Myth of Marxist Economics

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS: As I have always lived them, the ideas of philosophy and of politics (therefore also of the philosopher and of the militant) allow of no radical

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Interview with Olivier Mongin, Paul Thibaud, and Pierre Rosanvallon, recorded July 6, 1976. Originally published as "L'Exigence révolutionnaire," *Esprit*, February 1977, pp. 201–30, with a bibliography. Reprinted in *CS*, pp. 323–66.

separation; each leads to the other. For economics, it is a different thing. I worked for twenty-two years as an economist, but my concern with economics has not only been from the standpoint of a professional, for economics has interested me and it continues to interest me in its own right. This is so for two reasons.

First, because it forms a barrier or a block on the path to the demythification of Marxism. For all those who have remained faithful to Marxism, there is an alleged gold deposit in the bank of rigorous and positive Knowledge called *Das Kapital,* which proves, they believe, that the laws of capitalist economics guarantee the collapse of the capitalist system. This belief is an enormous stone block barring the route toward an awakening of consciousness among militants and people generally—one that will have to be blasted out of the way. I have been working on this, and I will continue to do so. I am presently working on texts concerning economics in which I try, on the one hand, to show that the idea of "scientific" knowledge in this domain is pure myth and, on the other hand, to reveal the ideological and metaphysical presuppositions lying at the base of Marx's political economy, ones which he in fact shares with bourgeois political economy.

Next, because for me it is important to show that, contrary to what is said—more exactly, to what is feared—exploding this myth does not signify at all that we are to remain completely disarmed, with no understanding or comprehension of what goes on in the economy or in society. Similarly, when I attempt to show not only that there is no rigorous knowledge about society and history, but that there *cannot* be any, it in no way follows that we are unable to understand anything about them, or that anything whatsoever can happen, that we are immersed in an aleatoric night in which all cows would be possible.

From the Superiority of Theory . . .

As concerns the ties between politics and philosophy, they are, as is known, historically very ancient: philosophy, political thought, and even political action in the true sense of the term (as action intending the institution of society, not as court intrigue) are born together and express the same movement, society's internal questioning of its own instituted social imaginary. Quite rapidly, however, the ties between philosophy and political thought take on a peculiar character, one they still retain (as is the case with Marx, too, of course): that of the *subordination* of political thought to a theory, therefore, in the last analysis, to a philosophy—philosophy itself still being conceived here as essentially theoretical, or as theory par excellence, even when it calls itself practical philosophy, philosophy of art, et cetera. This theory claims to possess—or to be able to have access to—knowledge about the being of history, about the being of society, about the being of man. This knowledge supposedly determines and founds what, politically speaking, is to be done. (And those who say today that we *cannot* have a revolutionary politics, a revolution, an explicitly self-instituting society, because we *cannot* have such knowledge, remain prisoners of exactly the same speculative attitude. In both cases, knowledge is granted mastery, either positively or negatively.)

Now, a new view, conception, and positing of politics both goes hand in hand with a rupture within philosophical and inherited ontological thought and implies

a new conception of the *relationship* between philosophical and political thought. Classical thought claims to have access to a theoretical view of *what is* in its "essential" or "fundamental" determinations, and *what is* supposedly would also determine *what is to be done.* That is how it is in Plato, in Aristotle, in Spinoza, in the great German idealists–but that is also the way it is in Marx (who, quite obviously, also is classical). In him, and for him, there is a theory of society and of history that shows both where things are at *and* where they will be at the next stage.

Let us note in passing that, in this version of the classical view, politics is actually *suppressed*: the goal and the agents of the transformation of society have been predetermined, there remains at best a "political" *technique* for arranging in optimal fashion the "means" of this transformation. And even then, one still encounters immediately the well-known argument against this position, which people have not failed to make since the nineteenth century: If the laws of history really are such that communist society cannot but be the successor to capitalist society, there is no more reason to fight for its advent than for the rising of tomorrow's sun. The argument is banal and may sound simple-minded, but it is irrefutable. A technical activity can be satisfied with the "ability to be otherwise" [*pouvoir-être-autrement*] (as Aristotle would say) of what is in its "secondary" or "accidental" determinations; a genuine action, a praxis, implies the ability to be otherwise of what is in its very depths, as signification and as value–and, of course, also the *willing* to be otherwise [*vouloir-être-autrement*].

From the moment one glimpses that history cannot (any more, indeed, than anything else) be thought by means of the traditional view, according to which "to be" signifies "to be determined"; from the moment, more particularly, one grasps history as creation and society as always both instituting and instituted (society can exist and function only as instituted society–but this institution is its own creation); from the moment, therefore, one sees history as this incessant self-creation, self-institution of society, one is led first to repudiate radically the inherited conception of the meaning of "being" (and this repudiation, moreover, extends immediately to all domains, beyond just that of the social-historical). In this way one is also led to free the political problem and politics completely from the framework in which they had traditionally been thought. Politics becomes a component of the self-institution of society, the component corresponding to a lucid making/doing [*faire*], elucidated as much as possible, which intends the institution of society as such. Not chairmanship of the city council or the presidency of the republic, or the change of such and such a particular law–but the overall institution of society.

. . . *To Realist Knowledge*

PAUL THIBAUD: As a matter of fact, this "making/doing, elucidated as much as possible" raises the question of what you are saying about revolution. In most people's minds, the idea of revolution is tied to that of totality. To revolutionize is to change everything; it is the contrary of empiricism, which takes things bit by bit. And you have just told us: the idea that one might be able to possess the totality is counterrevolutionary. It is a reversal, and this reversal perhaps raises difficulties. You put down the alleged Marxist science of revolution, but this science came after the revo-

lution actually happened, after the revolutionary passion that 1789 appears to have introduced into our history. You seem to be saying in your book, apropos of the various forms of Stalinism, that a deviation in revolutionary practice developed starting from a false, pretentious intellectual representation. But does not the connection work mainly in the other direction? Is not the revolution like an act that engenders a type of representation, a desire to place oneself in an overarching position, so as to be able to say at last what the fate of humanity and of the world is?

CASTORIADIS: This is an objection that has often been addressed to me: once the entire path has been traveled, to continue to appeal to *the* revolution would be to appeal to totality, to a knowledge of this totality, to the possession of this knowledge; or else, it would be to postulate a transparency of postrevolutionary society to itself, or a "knowledge" of society about its own institution. What amuses me is that, first of all, I was, if I am not mistaken, the first to have criticized the idea of postrevolutionary society as "transparent for itself" and to denounce in the writings of Marx what I have called "communism in its mythical sense" [in 1964–65; see *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 110–14]; and secondly, that I have responded in advance and at length to this type of objection [ibid., pp. 71–79, 84–90, 95–101], whereas I have never seen any refutation, discussion, or even a simple taking into account of this response of mine. Everything happens as if the critics did not want to hear anything other than this syllogism that is pounding in their heads: the revolution intends the transparency of society; a transparent society is impossible; therefore, the revolution is impossible (or is possible only as totalitarianism). But what does that express other than *their own* obsession with transparency, totality, absolute knowledge, et cetera? Or, in more "objective" terms, what else does it express but their complete imprisonment in the illusory antinomies speculative philosophy here produces through its radical misrecognition of making/doing, of the terrain of making/doing, and of its own exigencies?

The exigency that one make for oneself at every instant a representation, as elaborated and elucidated as possible, of what one does and of why one does it is an ineliminable component of all human action. I cannot act without this permanent need to represent to myself what I intend, the motives for which I intend it, the paths that can lead me to it. Neither, however, can I act if I enslave myself to a representation, forged once and for all, of what I intend, of my motives and of the paths I will follow. No one has ever written a book—save for lousy professors writing lousy books—knowing in advance exactly what he was going to say in this book, and still less knowing in advance what that which he was going to write ultimately would mean. All the same, I can write a book only by successively forging for myself, during the entire process of reflection and composition, a representation of what I want to say, making provisional tables of contents, plans I tear up along the way, et cetera. Now, these two exigencies (which the speculative attitude sees and can only see as antinomic, but which are more than solidary and complementary), namely, to represent to oneself what one intends and not to enslave oneself to this representation, are just as present, if not more so, in that particular category of action that is praxis—a term that has fairly much been ruined since Marx's time, and to which I want to give a new meaning: *praxis* is the making/doing in which the other or

others are intended as autonomous beings who are considered the essential agent of the development of their own autonomy.

I cannot raise a child, telling myself, "I absolutely will not take into account the totality of what this child is"—or, "Totality cannot be taken into account because the child is not a closed totality, but an open one." The child is, of course, an open totality, if one wants to use this terminology. But it is *because* the child is a totality, *and* an open totality, that a true pedagogical problem exists. If I do raise my child, or any child whatsoever, it is precisely qua open totality that I intend the child; that is to say, qua virtually (and, moreover, also effectively) autonomous being. Raising a child signifies aiding the child, to the greatest extent possible, to accede to this autonomy and to develop it. To do this, I am obliged to take the child into account such as it is and as it *makes itself*—which prevents me from enslaving myself and from enslaving it to a representation forged once and for all of what this child, and every child, is and should be. The same goes in psychoanalytic treatment. It is really aberrant to believe that there is a rigorous theory of the psyche. There is no such thing. It is also aberrant to believe that there is a rigorous psychoanalytic technique in general. There is no such thing. Save for two or three abstract rules (basically negative orders or instructions for abstention), it may be said that the analyst and the analysand forge together, during the treatment, the "technique" of *this* treatment. And during the treatment, the analyst is constantly obliged to take the analysand into account as a totality—a totality in the process of transforming *itself* in and through the analysis.

Autonomy as Goal and as Means

THIBAUD: That being so, there remains the question of the relationship between the type of knowledge one can have of an object (the social object in this case) and the type of intervention one can have on this object. We witness Trotsky, for example in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, saying: When one has for humanity plans as great as those of the Bolsheviks, one has the right to the corresponding means. In contrast to this, I see you defending paradoxically a sort of revolutionary wisdom. It is as if, for us, the limit of our knowledge was not to produce a limitation on our action. To take the example you just provided, even if all pedagogy has to intend the personality of the child as a whole, its action is bounded by the awareness it has of its ignorance of what the totality to which it refers is.

CASTORIADIS: I do not know if I am wise, I know that I want to be as coherent as possible. What really is at issue, in the final analysis, in the conception of revolution that is mine? That people take charge collectively of their own affairs, and also that I, we, have to do and will to do something in order for that to occur. But, obviously, what we have to do is not to drill them by force into becoming autonomous—an idea that merely has to be formulated in order to bring out its absurdity. And what is the hidden conception underlying the quotation from Trotsky you have cited, and so many others from Lenin and from Trotsky which we easily could find? That the Party *directs* the march of humanity toward communism, and therefore decides the means, and that these means have no internal relation to the "end," which is determined elsewhere, by "historical laws," the development of the forces of

production, and so on. For us, however, the content of the revolutionary project is that people become capable of taking charge of their own affairs and that—this is the same thing, the consequence of that thing, and another thing; we are, from the point of view of identitary logic, in "paradoxes" here—the sole means for them to become capable of taking charge of their own affairs is that they take charge of them, and this to a greater and greater extent.

PIERRE ROSANVALLON: I am in agreement when you say that all revolutionary thought is necessarily iconoclastic and critical. In this case, it is right to posit that there is no absolute knowledge (be it Marxism), no messianic redeemer (be it the proletariat), no salvation guaranteed by the revolution. In striking out against all these myths, your project therefore appears as radically revolutionary. It is true that we can conceive of history as self-creation, as self-institution, only on the condition that we renounce the declaration of an absolute knowledge. On that basis, however, I will pose two questions for you.

First, I see very well how your critique leads you to reject a certain number of political positions, how it denounces both reformism and totalitarianism. Nevertheless, we must go further. What are the concrete theoretical and practical conditions for a genuine self-institution of society? It seems to me that you remain fairly silent on this point.

The other question: Your project in fact boils down to moving politics from the field of history and of knowledge to the field of morality. Ultimately, you are above all a moralist. How would you define this political ethic, or this ethic *tout court*, which underlies your critique of a certain revolutionary idealism?

CASTORIADIS: There are a lot of questions there, but before coming to them I would like to clarify a point that remained up in the air in the response I gave to Paul Thibaud. Let it be understood that what I say about the paths a revolutionary politics can take today absolutely does not pertain to some kind of "pedagogical tolerance." It is not because people will "learn better" if they themselves find the solution to a problem that one avoids trying to impose something on them. It is rather because they alone can *invent*, *create* a solution to a problem of which today no one can have even a suspicion. That too is what recognizing creativity in history signifies.

Unlimited Interrogation

I now come to your questions. I am not especially fond of iconoclasm as such; I am far from being an unconditional supporter of iconoclasm, that is to say, of smashing things for the sake of smashing them. What is happening at present, what is the vile dish [*l'infâme salmigondis*] so popular these past few years here in Paris? On every street corner, from the Bois de Vincennes to the Bois de Boulogne, people are being iconoclastic. And obviously, if one is being iconoclastic of the previous iconoclasm, there is a process of outbidding going on on the iconoclasm market, et cetera. The final result is the nullity, the total emptiness of the contemporary "subversive discourse," which has become a mere consumer object and, in another respect, the perfectly adequate form of "left-wing" ideological conservatism. It is not a matter of that. We have before us a certain number of humanity's historical creations; we are

living in, among, and through them. The question is what they signify for us and what we want to do with them. Some of these creations date back to the very constitution of human society or are, as one likes to say, consubstantial with the institution of society.

To take one massive example, what I call identitary logic[1] has to be there *as soon as* society institutes itself and *in order* that it might institute itself. Whatever grip mythical and magical significations may have over an archaic society, this society cannot be "mythical" and "magical" if two and two do not make four; and when they do make five, they do so only under certain conditions. A truism, but let us say it since I have been accused of conceiving the revolution as an absolute tabula rasa, a total break with the past: the revolution will not abolish arithmetic, it will put it in its place.

A second example, a prolongation of the first: as I have tried to show, identitary logic becomes universally dominant with the birth of philosophy and of theoretical thought as such. In the latter, which is an immense historical *creation* marking a *radical* rupture between its before and its after, the emergence of unlimited interrogation signifies a rupture with the mythical universe, an open search for signification, whereas myth's function was to close [signification] by satisfying this search once and for all. This search takes place, however, within the horizon, by the means, and under the norms of identitary logic. Once born, thought immediately becomes Reason. It is not a matter of smashing Reason for the sake of smashing it, or of smashing it simply because it is there. It is a question of understanding, first of all, where it comes from and where, potentially, it is going—that is to say, where it can *lead us*; therefore, it is a question in the first place of elucidating its origins and its function. This does not suffice, however; we have not finished with an idea simply by saying: It comes from there, and today it serves for this or that. "Origin" and "function" do not exhaust signification. If one is content with them and if one takes them as something absolute, "genealogies," "archaeologies," and "deconstructions" will remain superficial and represent in fact a flight from the question of truth—a flight characteristic and typical of the contemporary era. The question of truth requires [*exige*] that we confront the idea itself, that we dare, should the occasion arise, to admit error and to circumscribe its limits—in short, that we try to put it in its place. Thus today, it is a matter of putting in its place the "theoretical" universe created during the twenty-five preceding centuries (and which people have wanted to put in the place of the universe *tout court*), showing both its validity *and* the limits of this validity.

Also, in the domain of most interest to us, it is not a matter for me of iconoclasm in general. It is a matter of showing that, in their content, the ideas and the ideologies that at present prevail and claim to be revolutionary are, in the first place, erroneous, inconsistent, incoherent; and, in the second place, participate in the world they claim to be combating. Thus, I have tried to show for a long time that Marxism has remained prisoner of the capitalist ideology and, beyond that, of the entirety of Greco-Western ontology. In my view, however, this demonstration has meaning only because I am attempting to show the limits of this ontology. (Likewise, it does not suffice for me, and it does not suffice at all, to show that Marx shared the key postulates of bourgeois political economy; it must also be shown that these postu-

lates do not yield any sort of "economic knowledge"—any more, indeed, than any other group of postulates.)

The Revolutionary Project . . .

There remains then for us a still greater task. This already was apparent when I spoke of a "putting in place." Putting in place within *what,* at *what* place, *by means of what?* Putting in place within a new social-historical world, which is, in part, in the process of creating itself, and, in part, *to be created.* For that, what you call "ethics" does not suffice. I am in no way taking exception to the term itself. On the contrary, everything that is happening today prompts me rather to insist on the term very loudly. The ethical problem is neither eliminated today, nor subsumed under the political problem, as Bolshevism and even Marxism thought. It remains ineliminable, not only in our "private" life but in our political life. For he who adheres, with a certain lucidity, to a revolutionary political project, there is always a basis, a "subjective" source for this adherence that is ethical in the following sense: he considers himself responsible for what he wills [*veut*] and for what he does, and he tries to will and to make/do with the greatest lucidity of which he is capable.

In politics, however, much more is involved; and, I think, that is what you intended when you spoke of collective work and of practical and social conditions for a revolution. *What* we choose as individuals who, gripped by the exigency of ethics (that is, not doing just anything whatsoever), adhere to a political project is not intended merely for our "private" life and above all is not and cannot be our pure personal creation. We do not invent, ex nihilo, the revolutionary project; this project was born (not to go back any further) in Western society around two centuries ago. Since the French Revolution and the first (near contemporaneous) movements of English workers, this society has been characterized by a crisis—not a conjunctural crisis, or an economic crisis, but an internal scission—by a conflict by means of which one of the constitutive parts of society—as it turns out, the workers, and notably the English workers—have been led not simply to defend their "economic" position but to lay down, thirty or forty years before Marx ever picked up a pen, the project of another society and to provide it with some formulations that remain for us even today, in a sense, almost unsurpassable.

. . . in Western Capitalist Society

Now, this society, Western capitalist society, which for two centuries has developed to an extraordinary degree and has achieved unprecedented economic growth and a "technical progress" greater than that of preceding millennia, still remains marked by this crisis. This crisis is only another name for its internal conflict: there is no "objective crisis," a society does not rot like a wooden beam; there is a crisis only to the extent that there is conflict, struggle, internal contestation. "Contestation," in the strong sense I have given to this term since 1960, signifies the nonacceptance by a considerable number of people, men and women, young people and now children, of the mode of organization and of life, of the values, of the norms, and of the goals [*finalités*] of the society in which they live. Over a long period of time, the pre-

dominant form of this contestation has been working-class struggles, its bearer has most of the time been the industrial proletariat.

This has not been the case for some decades now in the countries of developed capitalism. That does not signify, however, as some have wanted to say, that the working class has been integrated without remainder into the system. The workers' contestation of the system continues under the form of the struggle in and around production (a form that has always been, in my view, much more important than the lodging of "economic" demands) as concerns the conditions, the methods, the modalities of work, a struggle that is constantly unfolding in the business firm and is constantly posing the following question: Who is the master here, who actually dominates the work process? The master is, in a sense, the bureaucratic-capitalist management of the business firm—but this mastery is constantly being contested by laboring people.

Two other forms of contestation have come to be added to this one. They are just as important, if not more so (as everyone now knows, but may not have known in 1960, for example). The women's movement, for example. By this term, I do not mean women's lib, the MLF,[2] et cetera, but something much deeper that comes from a time much further removed. Since, let us say, 1880, unknown, anonymous everyday women in Western countries have begun an underground form of work: days, nights, at the dinner table, in the marriage bed, in relation to the children, in transgressing sexual taboos, in entering into allegedly masculine professions, and so on. Now, all this leads to the present-day situation, to an incredible transformation of the "feminine condition" (therefore also, automatically, of the "masculine condition"), whose depth and whose effects remain absolutely *incalculable*. We are in the process of seeing and of living here something that goes well beyond even the crisis of capitalist society, since what is virtually being destroyed is something—the definition of the "feminine condition," perhaps the very idea of a "feminine condition"—that is anterior to the constitution of "historical" societies. Moreover, this transformation reveals other aspects of the crisis of society even as it contributes to the deepening of this crisis. There can be no society in which there is not a certain type of "family," "family" being taken here in the sense in which, at the limit, even the embryo factories in Huxley's *Brave New World* are "families," that is, regulated forms for the fabrication of new social individuals. Now, by means also of the women's movement, we are witnessing at present an increasing decomposition of this regulated form, and this goes hand in hand, moreover, with the disappearance of an entire series of other bearings and points of reference for individuals and for groups, for society, as regards their lives. The same can be said of the youth movement, and even of changes in the situation of children.

The Central Aim

Now, in all these movements of contestation, I claim to find, or to recognize, a unity of meaning [*signification*], or better, an internal relation among the significations they bear. This is the aim of autonomy, therefore, on the social and political level, of the institution of an autonomous society—which ultimately signifies for me the explicit self-institution of society. The revolutionary project is the same thing—and,

in the sense we were just discussing, it is a historical creation we find already there facing us.

The discussion remains open. *One* objection, however, is inadmissible, the one that says, "But it is you that finds for all that a signification, a unity or an internal relation of signification." Yes, it is me. Likewise—and here we have an equally weighty affirmation—it is you that says, "No, all that is devoid of signification." Certainly, it is I that initiates such an interpretation of contemporary history, just as it is reactionary or conservative sociology that sees everywhere only the failure of workers' movements and considers them the "mishaps" of the capitalist system even before it has reached full maturity. As for this latter interpretation, it too, of course, issues from a political will; there is nothing "purely sociological" or "scientific" about it. In no domain, not even in "pure" philosophy, is there an interpretation that is unconnected with a project and a will. The idea of a "pure interpretation" is another of the mystifications by which the contemporary era tries to mask its desperate flight from the question of truth and of will. Marx, Freud, the classical philosophers, et cetera, are "interpreted" interminably in order not to have to confront the question: To what extent is what Marx, Freud, et cetera, have said *true*, and to what extent is this relevant *for us today?*

I am making the interpretation I am making of the history of the Western world and of the world *tout court* over the past two centuries to the best of my knowledge, to the best of my abilities, undoing as many as I can of the innumerable traps that things as well as I myself set for me in my research. I do so, however, also in terms of a political will, the correlate of which, lying outside me, is a revolutionary project, one that I myself have not invented and that is incarnated, created, in and through actual history. Certainly, the conception I have of this project is the coresultant of my interpretation, of my elucidation, but no one can erase the *fact* that people have risen up crying, "To live working or to die fighting," singing, "Neither God, nor Caesar, nor tribune."[3] The revolutionary project is there in actual history, it speaks, it speak *of itself* since it is not an "objective tendency" but a manifestation of people's activity that can exist only if it is, to a certain degree, conscious and only if it gives itself its form. At the very most, someone can say that the idea and the aim behind "Neither God, nor Caesar, nor tribune" are absurd or utopian, but it is *he* who says it, he *chooses* to say it (for he could never *prove* it), he is responsible for this choice—and the question still remains: *Why* does he say it, what does he *want* [*veut-il*]?

All this refers us back to what I call the *circle of praxis*. This circle can be defined, like any circle that respects the rules of plane geometry, by three noncollinear points. There is struggle and contestation in society; there is the interpretation and elucidation of this struggle; there is the political aim and the will of he who elucidates and interprets. Each of these points refers [*renvoie*] to the others, all three are absolutely solidary. (I say "elucidation," and not theory: there is no "political theory" in the strict sense; and, in any case, theory is only a particular instance of elucidation.)

I do not know if I really have responded to your questions.

Savages and Civilizers

ROSANVALLON: You rightly insist on the fact that you are not the "inventor" of this revolutionary project. Indeed, one need only refer to what the workers' movement was in the nineteenth century, a movement that, indeed, was often different from the interpretation given of it today. It is true that at the outset the workers' movement was marked by a rejection of political mediation, it defined itself as will to self-emancipation through the development of themes such as that of association. As a matter of fact, this project could be described in much greater detail. What matters, however, at this point in the discussion does not lie there. What counts is that this project, wholly contained in a practice that I would qualify as "savage,"[4] has not ceased to encounter civilizers, people who have wanted to endow it with theories, ideologies, tasks to accomplish, organizational means to be employed. To civilize it is to provide it with the horizon of its power, its knowledge, its becoming; in a word, to make it a historical agent.

Now, you rightly judge that this civilizing movement has stifled the revolutionary project of the workers' movement. So be it. The question, however, remains: What are the conditions that allow this savage movement to be genuinely self-creative and constructive, to surpass itself as movement of protest and refusal, as simple manifestation of a hope? To be more precise, how is one to pass from revolt to revolution, from contestation to the transformation of society?

I pose these questions to you because, in listening to you and reading your work, I sometimes have the feeling that you are dreaming of a pure social movement, one that would remain in its wild state [*sauvage*], preserved from all mediation; as if every institutionalization contained already in germinal form a betrayal of the revolutionary project. Is it possible to conceive a self-institution that would settle the problem while bringing out a pure freedom in its effects?

MONGIN: Can we not take Pierre's question in reverse? Indeed, if one looks at a traditional mode of political reflection, whereby one inquires into the relations between the State and society, between political society and civil society, into the role of the institution, one is surprised that you leave all that out of your book. Could you offer some precise details about these types of questions? That might help us to perceive better the conditions of the possibility of a self-instituted society. Is the State, for example, not bound to disappear in a self-instituted society? All political representation, too?

CASTORIADIS: Yes, certainly. On that, for the moment, I cannot add much to what has been put forward by the revolutionary movement of contestation in modern society. Anonymous texts by English workers from 1818 or 1820 expressly state that associations of producers are to replace the State and that society has no need of any other government than these associations themselves. And that remains for me an absolutely essential element of the idea of an autonomous society, one that self-institutes itself explicitly, namely, the necessity of abolishing the State, the legal monopoly on violence left in the hands of an apparatus separated from society. Certainly, important consequences and profound problems result from this, to which we will perhaps be able to return.

To come to Rosanvallon's questions, I think that we would be, you and I, in

agreement that the most profound, the most important, the longest-lasting things have been said not by the "civilizers" but by "savages" who arise suddenly from the depths of society.

The example that matters most to me is that of the creation of new institutional forms. The Parisian workers had to make the Commune for Marx, who at the outset counseled against an insurrection in Paris, to be able to arrive after the fact at the point where he declares the Commune the "finally found form" of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Russian people had to create the soviets in 1905 for Lenin, who at the outset was opposed to soviets, to arrive after the fact at the point where he could recognize their importance, or rather misrecognize it, since, to begin with, he sees in them only tools for struggle, and only later will he see them also as forms of power. After 1917, Russian workers, disappointed by the soviets, had to fall back on the factory committees and to set themselves to work, against Lenin's directives, at the expropriation of the capitalists for Lenin to produce, finally, in the summer of 1918, the decree on expropriation. In Hungary, in 1956, no one "taught" people anything at all; intellectuals, students, writers, theater people set themselves in motion, workers formed factory councils. None of these forms have been either predicted by or deduced from any theory whatsoever; they were *created* by people, in and through their struggle.

Of course, the creation of these institutional forms does not resolve all the problems of a postrevolutionary society. Immense questions open up, concerning, for instance, the coordination of the activity of the councils, the spheres of social life other than production, and so forth. We can have ideas on some subjects; we ought to have them even, and we ought to express them. I have tried to do so (in "On the Content of Socialism, II," in 1957)[5] on the points that seemed to me the most important, the most immediately critical, for the organization of a postrevolutionary society as it takes its first steps. We would be misapprehending the most deep-seated meaning of what we are saying, however, if we thought that *we* can *now* find the answer. Our role is not to pose as "civilizers" who would have the answer in our possession, but first to destroy the idea of civilizer, and the hold this idea has over the allegedly uncivilized or the savage. It is a matter of showing people that they themselves hold a possible response, that they themselves can invent it, that all the possibilities and organizational capacities of society are to be found in these people themselves. It is a matter of showing the sum total of absurdities and fallacies on which all justifications of the present-day system and of every hierarchical-bureaucratic system lean. It is a matter of destroying the idea that the system is all-powerful and omniscient, as well as the tenacious illusion that those who govern "know" and "are capable"—when their *organic* imbecility, what I have long called their *functional imbecility*, is daily demonstrated. It is also a matter of showing that there is no miracle institution, that every institution has validity only through what people make of it—but also that there are "antimiraculous" institutions; for example, we must show that every fixed, rigid, stable, separate political form of representation irresistibly becomes a form of political alienation, in which power passes from the represented to the representatives. The form of the revolution and of postrevolutionary society is not an institution or an organization given once and for all, but the *activity* of self-organization, or self-institution.

Revolt or Self-Institution

MONGIN: Listening to you, I have the impression that the term "revolt" would be more illuminating than the term "revolution." Are you not progressively led to substitute the term "revolt" for that of "revolution"? Would a society that would self-institute itself permanently not be a society that would revolt against itself permanently, indefinitely?

CASTORIADIS: I absolutely reject the idea that there can never be anything but a series of revolts. There have been, and there certainly still will be, a host of revolts, but there also have been in the modern era a series of revolutions: 1789, 1848, the Commune, 1917, 1919, 1936–37, 1956, and so on. I do not see in the name of what one could hide that fact. There are moments in which the mass of people not only "revolt" against the old order but try to modify the social institutions "from top to bottom"[6] (as texts written by English workers early in the nineteenth century say). These are revolutions, because people are animated by an *overall* will and an *overall* aim. We cannot abandon this overall aim without becoming incoherent.

Like reformism, "revoltism" is either totally incoherent or is a hidden form of bad faith. No politician, no person who thinks and who tries to do something as regards society can ever propose or undertake measures without asking himself about the repercussions this measure might have on other parts of the system. Take, for instance, a conservative politician. No matter how partial a measure he undertakes, he cannot undertake it without asking himself: If I do this on such and such a particular point, what is going to happen elsewhere? If he does not ask himself this question, or if he answers wrongly, he is contributing not to the conservation but to the ruination of the system (and that is what happens, as I have tried to show, almost necessarily under modern bureaucratic capitalism). Likewise, for a reformist politician: if he wants to introduce "serious" reforms, these reforms have to be internally coherent *as well as* consistent with what is not "reformed" (for a massive illustration of the contrary, see Allende). Society *is* totality, and this totality punishes those who do not wish to see it as such.

Thus too for the "revoltist": either he is incoherent or he is a revolutionary who refuses to admit that he is one, that is to say, he nourishes the secret hope that one day all these revolts will somewhere be able to accumulate, to add themselves up into a radical transformation.

Let us go further, since this "revoltism" today seems to be gaining ground among very honorable people who are quite close to us. What is its philosophical "foundation"? It is a *thesis* on the essence of the social. The father, closest to us, of this thesis is Merleau-Ponty, who wrote, in *The Adventures of the Dialectic*, that Marxism commits the error of imputing alienation to the content of history, whereas it belongs to its structure (I am citing from memory). Thus, the thesis: every society is essentially alienated, alienation pertains to the essence of the social. (Immediate consequence: the idea of a nonalienated society is an absurdity.) I have at length, though indirectly, discussed this thesis in the second chapter of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*; here I want to dwell on just two points.

First, what does one intend by "alienation"? That becomes clear when one recalls Merleau-Ponty's other formula: "There is something like a maleficence of existence

with other people"? [*Il y a comme un maléfice de l'existence à plusieurs*]. Except in the phantasms of an egological philosophy (of which Merleau-Ponty here reveals himself to be a prisoner), *there is no* existence except with other people, so this statement is equivalent to saying there is a maleficence to existence, period. This idea is devoid of meaning. Let us note in passing the split in Merleau-Ponty's thought in this regard (which may seem strange, but in truth is necessary, for the occultation of the social-historical is *condition of the possibility* of inherited thought). For Merleau-Ponty, the idea that I would be "imprisoned in my body," that corporeality is synonymous with slavery or alienation, is absurd; my body does not "limit" me, it is opening and access to the world. And that is evident. Now, I am, in this regard, a social-historical being, *as* I am "corporeal": the social and historical dimension of my being is not a "limitation" thereof, it is its very soil—on the basis of which alone "limitations" can or cannot appear. The existence of "several" others, and of an indefinite [number] of them, and of the institution in and through which alone they, like me, can be, is not "maleficence"; it is that on the basis of which I myself am made and I exist. Now, Merleau-Ponty has both seen that (strikingly so when it comes to language, but not only in that case) *and* he is unable/unwilling to see its ultimate consequences, above all when it comes to politics (he sees that making a child or making a living has nothing to do with absolute knowledge and yet is not for all that a blind activity—whereas he continues to require implicitly that revolutionary politics be subject to an absolute knowledge).

Secondly, if alienation belongs to the *structure* of history, it cannot be a matter of having more or less of it. On what basis and by what means, then, would one be able to *prefer* some form of society over another one?

THIBAUD: One has the impression, in your book, that you are talking at two levels. At an ontological level, your point is to show that man makes his own history and in particular that he is capable of creating something new; you are even saying that the thought that he creates something new in history is itself a new idea. At bottom, all that could very well be read in a nonrevolutionary framework; it is the simple affirmation that something happens. But other parts of your book no longer concern human history in general, but the extremely particular conjuncture through which we are living: we would be on the verge of the sole and unique revolution of the history of humanity, in a word, that of the self-institution of society, of the departure from the metaphysical, traditional, institutional guarantees under which societies have lived. We would be at an absolutely key trouble spot in history, a date when everything comes due.

CASTORIADIS: Due date [*échéance*] is not the right word. There is an exigency; not timeless, but rather historical.

THIBAUD: Nonetheless, the articulation between your ontological reflection and your historical thought raises suspicions; it goes together too well: not only can we do something, but we have to perform unprecedented actions. Our desire and our situation would be once again in perfect agreement. This confluence is nevertheless a little miraculous. It is too convenient for you, and perhaps it is also too convenient for those who read you.

CASTORIADIS: If confluence there be, it is not my fault, it is not I who bring it into being. Either what I am saying is totally false, and there is no point in talking

about it, or else in what I am saying there is something true, and that means: something that goes beyond the mere arrangement of my words, something that establishes a certain relationship between this discourse and what is. Now, it is not in my power to bring what is into being so that it will fit my discourse. It is not I who have made history be creation, or the revolutionary project exist for two centuries. Now, what you call miraculous is not an accident – though the terms "accident" and "not by accident" are meaningless here. Is the discussion we are having here this evening, in 1976, being held "by accident" or "not by accident"? It is "by accident" that we find ourselves existing in 1976; but also, this discussion could not have been held in 1676 – and this too is what our historicity signifies.

What led me to the ideas formulated in my book, and in particular to see history as creation? In the main, though not exclusively, it was the radical imcompatibility between the revolutionary project such as it has historically manifested itself and concretized itself for two centuries, and the idea of history as a *determined* process (whether this "determination" leads to the inevitability of communism or the perenniality of alienation makes absolutely no difference in this regard). It was an absolutely vital and *timely* [*actuelle*] question – but one that at the same time leads beyond the narrow time frame of today [*l' "actuel"*] and has obliged me to go back to Plato's *Timaeus* and say: in a sense, everything begins with a certain conception of time, of time as pure repetition.

What you call miraculous coincidence already existed in germinal form in the revolutionary problematic of the age. As long as one remains on the terrain of speculation – where Marxism and Marx himself remained, in what I have called the second element of his thought, the conservative-theoreticist element – revolutionary political will and thought will find themselves wedged between these two absolutely antinomic and irreconcilable ideas: the idea of society and history as determined, and the idea of a revolution creative of new forms of social life. This antinomy must be smashed. Now, smashing it leads one to see history as creation – an idea that, once stated, appears blindingly evident, almost banal. One is then led to ask oneself why this blinding evidence has not been "seen" before. It is the flip side of the question you are asking me, and it is the same question. And, in a sense, the answer is also the same: the view of history as determinate repetition is deeply woven into the necessities of the institution of society as it has existed until now; the "stability" of this institution, in the deepest sense, almost "required" [*exigeait*] that one *not* see history as essential creation. The "astonishing" thing, if you will, is the historical emergence of the revolutionary project, *not* the fact that the development of this project finally leads to seeing in the idea of the ("technical," transcendental, logical, or what have you) determination of history an essential ingredient of the *institution* of heteronomous society, which this project aims at destroying.

Perhaps, however, your term "miraculous coincidence" results from a misunderstanding about the word "creation," which I would like in any case to dispel. Under my pen, this word has no connotation of value. A creation is not necessarily "good." The Gulag is a grandiose creation; it had to be made up, it had to be invented.

Similarly, in another domain, psychotic delirium is a creation – and this is neither to glorify it nor to extol schizophrenia, as is done in certain fashionable discourses. The societies of the Mundugumor, Kwakiutl, Bororo, et cetera, all represent histori-

cal creations; *as such,* they are neither higher nor lower than Indian, Chinese, Assyrian, Athenian, or French society. And it is *precisely* because all these social forms are creations coming under the same heading–autonomous society as much as Auschwitz–that we feel gripped by the unavoidable question of our own making/doing qua responsible political subjects. It is *when* we have said that history is not predetermined, that it is the domain of creation, that the question of knowing *what* creation we want, *toward what* we want to orient this creation, fully arises for us. *For us,* because we are involved parties in the society in which we live, we have and we demand the right and the duty to speak and to make choices. Why is not *what* we are saying psychotic delirium or personal whim? Because it encounters a host of other actions and other discourses in society. It is historically rooted–which does not mean enslaved: we have the possibility of being revolutionaries or of not being so, and, if we are, we have the possibility, if that is what we think, of saying that we approve or disapprove of this or that being done in a revolution.

The Other of Reason

THIBAUD: To resume Olivier Mongin's question about the State in another way: *The Imaginary Institution* . . . is full of a sense of limits, in particular of the limit on what one can know in relation to what exists. What is curious, however, is that this book remains nonetheless a profoundly rational book, in the sense that the obscure, be it social or individual, does not seem to have any status there. And yet, people have always given themselves a sort of representation of the "core of night" within them, of the mystery they are for themselves, individually and collectively. I have the impression–here I am alluding to what Claude Lefort often says–that if you affirm that it is possible to be done with the State, if you affirm that we can grasp hold of ourselves and self-create ourselves, there are for us de jure neither myths nor institutions between us and ourselves.

CASTORIADIS: I do not believe it is fair to say that what you call "the obscure" has no status in what I think–or, more exactly, that there is no place for it; on the contrary, it has an immense place, it is in a sense the basis of everything. The expression "status of the obscure" seems to me more than contestable; the obscure would no longer be the obscure if we were able to circumscribe it and endow it with a status. Now, I presume that what you would oppose to the obscure would be a light of Reason . . .

THIBAUD: You have written a book on the limits of Reason.

CASTORIADIS: It is not only a book on the limits of Reason, it is a book that tries to indicate, to show, the other of Reason, and to speak about it as much as one can without falling into mere incoherence. I am trying to do this in the domain of the social-historical, as well as in the domain of the psyche–as, I remind you, some contemporary scientists, though their number be small, are trying to do in the field of the natural sciences; what they are trying to do is to understand what science really does, what it knows and does not know. An immense place is left for the obscure, I was saying, since ultimately there is no pure and simple "light of Reason," since the obscure penetrates Reason itself, *since Reason itself is "obscure"* (in its "origin," in its why and wherefore, in its how, in its relationship to what is not Reason).

Reason appears as nonobscure only so long as one limits oneself to "utilizing" it without interrogating oneself about it. And the relations between Reason and the other of Reason are eminently obscure. For example, we can never think while doing without ensemblistic-identitary logic. This logic is a social-historical creation. And at the same time it is related to certain aspects of *what is*—a relation I call "leaning on" [*étayage*], to borrow Freud's term—and it is radically heterogeneous with respect to what lies beyond these aspects, what I call a *magma*. By this term, I attempt to designate the "mode of organization," if I may express myself thus, of what is, what presents itself as indefinitely *rationalizable*, but is not *intrinsically rational*. And that it may be indefinitely rationalizable leaves open the question whether it is so in a fecund way, or simply in a formal and empty fashion—as is the case, for example, in the so-called human sciences.

Changing the Relationship between the Conscious and the Unconscious

THIBAUD: I would like to be more specific about the domain of the question How is self-institution possible if humanity is obscure to itself? I see here a hiatus, and I ask myself if the permanence of the State is not tied to this lag between us and our own action.

CASTORIADIS: Let us begin with an "example." The psyche is essentially arational; it is radical imagination. In the individual, what is "rational" results from its social fabrication and starts on the basis of the social institution of language, of logic, of reality, and so forth, and of their imposition on the individual. This implies, of course, that this social fabrication of the individual still finds a support [*étayage*] somewhere in the psyche, but that is not what matters for us right this instant. Now, what can I aim for, in my life, in relation to this obscure bottom that, in a sense, is eminently me? Or, what can I aim for when psychoanalyzing an individual? Certainly not the elimination of this obscure bottom, my Unconscious or his Unconscious—an enterprise that, if it were not impossible, would be murderous; rather, I can try to instaurate *another relationship* between Unconscious and Conscious (which implies, among other things, as I wrote already in 1964, not only that "where Id was, Ego shall come to be," but just as much that "where Ego is, Id shall spring forth"). The entire question is whether the individual has been able, by a happy accident or by the type of society in which he has lived, to establish such a relationship, or whether he has been able to modify this relationship in such a way as not to take his fantasies for reality, to be as lucid as possible about his own desire, to accept himself as mortal, to seek the truth even if it should cost him, et cetera. Contrary to today's prevailing imposture, I have affirmed for a long time that there is a *qualitative difference*, and not only a difference of degree, between an individual thus defined and a psychotic individual or one so heavily neurotic that he can be described as alienated, not in the general sociological sense, but in the quite precise sense that he finds himself expropriated "by" himself "from" himself. Either psychoanalysis is a swindle, or else it intends precisely this end, a modification of this relationship such as we have described it.

This is only an analogy, but in my view it is both valid and profound. In the case of society, too, it would be murderous, were it not impossible, to try to eliminate

the obscure bottom that is the source of all life and social-historical creation, what I call the imaginary in the most radical acceptation of this term, therefore to aim for some alleged sort of "transparency" of society to itself, which is an absurdity. It in no way follows, however, that it is impossible to establish *another relationship* between society and its institutions, which would no longer be a relationship of *enslavement* of society to its institutions, but one in which society knows that its institutions have nothing sacred about them, no foundation transcendent to society itself, that they are its own creation, that it can take them up again and transform them. That does not signify, nor does it require [*exige*], that society possess absolute knowledge about its institution, still less about itself in its full depth.

THIBAUD: Between a society and its institutions, there is no instrumental relationship; society cathects its institutions, it either loves them or detests them.

CASTORIADIS: But neither is my relationship to my consciousness, or to my unconscious, an instrumental relationship.

THIBAUD: Then what is a society that knows that its institutions are provisional? Can institutions be thought, by those who put them in place, by those who defend them, as something provisional? Does this adherence of society to its institutions not prevent it from functioning in pure freedom?

CASTORIADIS: But it never has been for me a question of "pure freedom," neither in the domain of society nor as concerns the individual.

Let us take another example. What is relatively free—or open, as one says—thinking? Is it the "pure freedom" of interrogation? The pure freedom of interrogation is not thinking, however; it no longer is anything at all. Each time I open an interrogation, each time I put something into question, I presuppose—be it only provisionally—that there are things that, for the moment, are not in question. I cannot at the same instant put everything into question. At the limit, as my great-great-grandfather—better known under the name of Plato—would say, if I put everything into question, including the words by which I put everything into question, I no longer put anything into question and there no longer is anything. Thought advances in an interrogation it undertakes by being obliged each time to maintain a certain number of things provisionally, though, in a second movement, I may put them back into question. Free or open thinking is the kind that exists in this movement. It is not a pure freedom, a flash across the void, a light propagating itself through the ether; it is a stepping forth that each time has to lean on something, to take its bearings on what is not itself as well as on its previous "results"—but it can turn back upon itself, see itself, put its presuppositions back into question, and so on. And all this is what thinking cannot do when it is enslaved. It is this other relationship, this movement that we also must see in what I call the explicit self-institution of society: neither a state defined once and for all, nor a "pure freedom," an absolute flux of everything at every instant, but a continuous process of self-organization and self-institution, the possibility and the capacity to put into question institutions and instituted significations, to take them up again, to transform them, to act on the basis of what is already there and by means of what is already there, but without becoming enslaved to what is already there.

Oppression Does Not Belong to the Structure of History

As for Lefort and his conception of the role of the State, the gap separating our presuppositions is too great to be able to speak about them in a few words. I will simply make two remarks.

For Lefort, at least as I understand him, society can become established [*s'instituer*] only by becoming divided *and* simultaneously by "responding" to this division (which also means, by covering it over) through the instauration of the State or of "political power" *separated* from society, which reaffirms and "re-realizes" the division at the very moment it presents itself as its effacement. Now, that is, first of all, an extremely partial view of the institution of society—which goes hand-in-hand with an exorbitant transhistorical dilation of "the political." Society institutes itself in instituting a magma of imaginary significations (which go far beyond "the political": they concern the world, the sexes, the ends of human life, and so forth), and it is they that *hold it together*, that "animate" the concrete institutions and are "incarnated" in these institutions, political institutions included.

Second, there is an intolerable and fatal equivocation in the use of the term "division" in this context. Is an archaic tribe that has neither a State nor "political power" properly speaking, but that includes clans and "moieties," et cetera, "divided" in Lefort's sense, or not? The evident *articulation* of every society is being drawn here in the direction of an *antagonistic and asymmetrical division*; therefore, a division between a separate *power*, in the strong sense of the term, and a nonpower—which amounts to saying, between oppressors and oppressed. How then does one avoid the conclusion that society can never become established [*s'instituer*] except as an oppressive society; as with Merleau-Ponty, alienation, now oppression, would belong to the "structure" of history. The issue is not that in our hearts this conclusion is unacceptable; it is that it (and its premises) is logically untenable and in reality *false*. The savage societies of which [Pierre] Clastres, for example, speaks (in *Society against the State*)[7] are not politically divided in an antagonistic and asymmetrical fashion; I will add, contrary to the Marxist vulgate, that slavery is in no way essential to existence of the city of antiquity, and that this city often was able to institute itself as direct democracy; political power was not separate but *en meso*, "in the middle," as [Jean-Pierre] Vernant and [Pierre] Vidal-Naquet have said, and was applied in such a way that no one person and no particular stratum could appropriate it for themselves.

A last remark, concerning perhaps the most important point in what you have just said. You ask: Would people be able to tolerate institutions they thought of as "temporary"? We have a certain historical experience on this issue, and in this regard I will distinguish two broad classes of societies. In a first class, nothing, save minor or trivial details, of its institution can be put explicitly into question; such is the case with all archaic societies, but also with a host of "historical" societies, such as the "Asiatic" monarchies, for whom power is literally sacred, or classical Jewish society, in which there obviously could be no question of modifying the Law, or medieval European societies. In relation to the first class, the second one represents a radical historical break; for me, until I am more amply informed on the matter, this break has at its origin a name, Greece. Here we have societies that, "sud-

denly," begin to contest and to put into question their own institution, and in their acts they pose the question, Why this law and not another?—the presupposition and consequence of which is that the *source* of the law is *we*, the people. The Athenian demos or the *Senatus populusque romanus* posit themselves explicitly as originators and potential modifiers of the law. And, after a long eclipse, this reappears in modern societies, with the "democratic" revolutions, which explicitly posit that sovereignty belongs to the people, and that there can be no power, including obviously legislative power, that does not emanate from them (that this rapidly becomes a mystification concealing a new form of political alienation is a *second* question).

This experience, however, is obviously limited and insufficient. It is obvious, for example, that the category of laws or of institutions the ecclesia at Athens could modify was highly circumscribed. It was inconceivable for someone to introduce a bill stating, "Henceforth, the father of the gods and of men is no longer Zeus, but X." (Still commentary would be necessary here on the implications of Aristophanes' plays, *Lysistrata* and *The Assembly of Women*.)[8] Likewise, in the course of the life of modern "democratic" societies (but not during revolutionary periods!), the theoretically total changeability of institutional rule remains, of course, in practice highly limited. Yet, when one considers a modern secular "democratic" State—France or Sweden, for example—that does not mean that the root of people's acceptance of existing institutions lies in the representation of their necessary immutability; it is the idea that what exists is best or the least bad possible, that it is the most ~~logical and, above all, that one *could not* do otherwise.~~

ROSANVALLON: There is, however, the permanence of national identity.

CASTORIADIS: I completely agree. Permit me to recall that there is, in the first part of *The Imaginary Institution* . . . [pp. 148–49], a passage on the nation as imaginary signification; in it, I invite Marxist comrades to tell us what the nation really *is* from the Marxist point of view, and how they are able to explain its permanence. How does it happen that people continue to kill each other in 1914, in 1939, in 1976, in spite of all "reality" and of all "rationality," in the name of the nation? An absolutely enormous problem.

Part of the answer is to be found, in my opinion, in this, that the hold the nation has over people is maintained because this instituted imaginary signification remains as an ultimate pole of identification for the individuals who make up a collectivity that is for better or worse structured in some way: What are you? I am French. It is, in a sense, like a proper name—and it is also more than a proper name, since it presents itself with a "content," with a reference to a "reality" that is, of course, mythical. It is both an emptiness and an overflow: *Which* French nation? That of the lords or that of the serfs? The one that instigated 1789 or the one that voted in the two Napoleons by plebiscite? Is being French to be the descendant of a Communard killed or deported to Guyana, or to be the descendant of the Marquis de Galliffet?[9] There is a beautiful "political" passage in Proust, where Charlus says to Morel, "There was a time when my ancestors were proud of the title of King's chamberlain," and where the cowardly Morel finds the courage to respond "proudly" to him, "There was another time, when my ancestors chopped off your heads."

The imaginary signification "nation" persists as both this emptiness and this overflow. We cannot conceal, however, the fact that this signification has also been

strongly put into question in contemporary history. There also has been, and this for the first time in the history of the world, a real internationalism, and people who by the hundreds of thousands sang "The international" and cried, "let us shoot our generals."[10]

ROSANVALLON: But history has proved that they were deluding themselves.

CASTORIADIS: I completely agree, I have strongly emphasized it and will not tire of emphasizing it. But I also take it as an indication that in the contemporary era we can consider no institutions as established, in people's representations, by the simple idea that the institution is necessarily permanent. Certainly, everyone would agree if we said that a law that each can change at every instant as it pleases him is not a law. But that is something else entirely.

The State and Political Society

ROSANVALLON: One of the difficulties we encounter in dealing with this question is that we have as analytical tools only the concepts of the State and civil society. We are then trapped when trying to treat social identity. These concepts, indeed, leave only one alternative: either one makes of the State society's pole of identity (and we know what that eventually leads to) or we confine ourselves to the representation of a heterogeneous civil society that would be self-sufficient, a civil society genuinely beyond our compass to the extent that it would not have the means for setting thresholds levels of internally acceptable heterogeneity.

How then do you see the role of a political society that would constitute a pole of identity without leading to society's becoming refracted into the State? How do you conceive a political society as site of confrontation, of regulation, of setting the threshold levels of heterogeneity that society is forced to establish so as not to perish? It seems to me that this question of political society is often occulted. Nevertheless, only the development of a genuine political society allows one to think without eventual contradiction a certain withering away of the State and the recreation of a genuine civil society.

CASTORIADIS: First, the idea that it is the State that furnishes and that alone can furnish society a pole of identification and a representation in which society can recognize itself as one is a *false* idea. There are collectivities that are instituted as collectivities with a common reference other than the State; an imaginary reference, to be sure, in the sense I have given to the term "imaginary," which "founds" the identity of the collectivity, of its members, and underlies its articulations. A digression: I always suspect that behind this idea of the State as "unifier" lies the conception that the natural, initial state of the human species is a state of molecular dispersion. And behind this conception, we find again the classical philosophy of the subject, of the *ego cogito*, of the autarchic consciousness. The strange thing is that, even when Descartes is outstripped on the level of "pure" philosophy, he is still there on the level of political philosophy, a topic about which he had hardly bothered himself. These necessarily solipsistic Cartesian subjects are reunited either by a "social contract" or by the *coup de force* of the State, which obliges them to surmount their natural and even ontological dispersion. Individuals, however, are always *already* social; they exist, they can exist *only* as always already "unified" in and

through a sociality in general *and* a concrete sociality, which the "State" itself, when and where it exists, presupposes. What is always already there is not a physical or biological assemblage, or a juxtaposition of thinking monads, but always a collectivity instituted as such, instituted by reference to imaginary significations the collectivity itself posits, among which always also are to be found an imaginary signification that it itself imputes to itself. This function appears to be fulfilled by the "we" of the collectivity under consideration, but this "we," of course, never remains a simple "we"; it is "filled" with specific references: we who have such and such ancestors, we who believe in such and such gods, we who speak such and such a language, we who choose our spouses in such and such a way, we who have undergone such and such a ceremony of initiation, and so on. It is these references, and not the "State," that, in a host of societies, play the role of unifying pole. That obviously does not mean that these societies are, for all that, free, happy, or societies after our heart; that is not what we are discussing at the moment.

I agree with you that the State/civil society dilemma is truly a *trap*, and that what matters for us is the instauration of a genuine political society; and this is exactly what I mean by a society that self-institutes itself explicitly. The "we" becomes here: *we are the ones who have as law to make our own laws*. The self-reference of the collectivity becomes then self-reference as sovereign and active body that within itself admits of no division or differentiation *as to its power*. Not: that within itself admits of no sort of differentiation; that I have never said, I never will say, and I do not even know what it could mean. The idea of a total "homogenization" of society is, in fact, the horizon of Marx's thought (and this idea has taken "concrete" form by being inverted into its contrary, in and through Stalinist totalitarianism). For us, it is not a matter of aiming at homogeneity, nor of suppressing the differences or the alterities within society. It is a matter of suppressing political hierarchy, the division of society as division between power and nonpower. And we know, too, that this power is not only and not simply "political" in the narrow sense; it is also power over people's work and consumption, power over women, power over children, and so on. What we are aiming for is effective equality on the level of power—and a society that would have such equality as its pole of reference. And it is quite obvious that this idea is itself a historical creation and an imaginary signification, for already power and politics are not "natural," as it is obvious that, neither "naturally" nor otherwise, are we equal or nonequal: we are *other*. But *we will* to be equal as relates to power.

Notes

1. Identitary logic is that logic that institutes the world as rationally and technically knowable and manipulable: it "refers to distinct and definite objects that can be collected together to form wholes, that can be composed and decomposed, that are definable in terms of determinate properties and that serve as the support for the definition of these properties" (*The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Oxford: Polity, 1987], p. 227 [translation slightly altered]).

2. T/E: "Women's lib" appears in English and in italics in the original text. The MLF is the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes, a French feminist organization created in 1968.

3. T/E: The slogan was shouted by the Canuts, the Lyon-area silk weavers who revolted in 1835. The line comes from the revolutionary song "L'Internationale."

4. T/E: Although Castoriadis makes it clear that he does not accept this dichotomy between

"savages" and "civilizers" (the point, he says, is instead to destroy it), we should note that Rosanvallon is perhaps responding in part to Castoriadis's frequent references to "wildcat strikes," which in French are known as "savage strikes" (*grèves sauvages*).

5. T/E: In *PSW 2*, pp. 90–154.

6. T/E: The phrase "*de fond en comble*" appears in the text, followed by "from top to bottom"in italics.

7. T/E: *Societies against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. Robert Hurley and Abe Stein (New York: Zone, 1988).

8. T/E: I translate the Greek original (*Ekklesiasousai*) and the French (*L'Assemblée des femmes*) literally. The usual English translations of this play by Aristophanes, *The Congress of Women* or, especially, *Women in Parliament*, create an intolerable anachronism, quite inappropriate to Castoriadis's emphasis on direct democracy in ancient Greece, where the assembly of citizens, the ecclesia, ruled.

9. T/E: Gaston Auguste Marquis of Galliffet (1830–1909) led the Versaillese army in the repression of the Paris Commune.

10. T/E: Paraphrased from the revolutionary song "L'Internationale."

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The Hungarian Source

For years to come, all questions that count *can be summed up as follows: Are you for or against the action and the program of the Hungarian workers?*[1]

I should apologize for quoting myself. But, twenty years later, I stand by these lines—more firmly, and more savagely, if possible, than when I wrote them. And it is not what happened, or rather, what did not happen during this time in the "sphere of ideas"—the silence surrounding the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in virtually all "Left," "New Left," and "extreme Left" literature—that would alter my attitude. Indeed, this silence is a rather sinister index both of the quality of this output and of the underlying motivations of people who consider themselves to be "revolutionaries." It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this silence is one of the signs of

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Text originally written in English for the American review *Telos* (St. Louis, Mo.), where it was published (no. 29, Fall 1976) with numerous alterations allegedly pertaining to its "editing" [T/E: in Castoriadis's 10/18 French edition publication note, the italicized word "editing" appears in English]. Most of these alterations were limited to a flattening of the wording, while some of them actually adversely affected the meaning. Maurice Luciani's translation from the original typescript is published as "La Source hongroise," in *CS*, pp. 376–411. I thank him for his excellent work. [T/E: And I thank John Fekete, the editor of the Fall 1976 issue of *Telos*, for sending me in 1991 a photocopy of what may be the last surviving copy of Castoriadis's English-language typescript. This photocopy serves as the basis for the present version, which has been standardized for the *PSW* series and adapted on occasion to bring out the author's full meaning in English. I have tried to be as faithful to the original English typescript as possible, restoring all cuts *Telos* made. When the last line of a page has disappeared as a result of the photocopying process, I have consulted both the French translation and the "edited" *Telos* version. At times, the *Telos* editing has been helpful; at others, the changes made were to be avoided at all costs. I also have translated a paragraph that had been added to the 1979, French-language version of this article; it appears between brackets below.]

the domination of reactionary ideas in the contemporary world; what it means is that the Stalinist bureaucracy continues, even if more indirectly than before, to dictate the allowed and forbidden topics of discussion. (Today, the *relevant* reactionary ideas are, of course, the ideas of the bureaucracy—not those of Ronald Reagan. Besides, there is little doubt that Reagan and Brezhnev would agree about Hungary.)

Of course, the actual impact of the Hungarian Revolution cannot be gauged by this standard alone. Opposed to the ideological *repression* (a word to be taken here in its psychoanalytical sense, as well) of the memory of the 1956 events, there has certainly been a continuous "working through" of their meaning. Apart from their probable subterranean effects in Eastern countries and in Russia itself, there is little doubt that the wide diffusion of the idea of self-management over the last two decades is to be linked to the exemplary demands of the Hungarian workers' councils. Here again, it is of course no accident if most of the organizations advocating "self-management" (in particular, but by no means only, reformist parties and unions) keep silent about Hungary and prefer to refer, for example, to the more respectable (and contentless) Yugoslavian "model." This divorcing of the idea of self-management from the power of workers' councils and the destruction of the existing order allows them to present self-management as something that could be just added on, without many tears, to the present system. Nevertheless, the spreading of the idea of self-management is undermining the foundations for the bureaucracy's domination, and it is by no means sure that the reformist bureaucrats will succeed in making of it a mere embellishment for the established order.

I spoke about the silence that, for years now, has surrounded the Hungarian Revolution. The *bibliography* covering the Hungarian events of 1956 has now reached the level of several thousand volumes. Most of these writings, however, are by specialists for specialists; they are indicative much more of the tremendous expansion of the academic writing and publishing business than of a true recognition of the revolutionary significance of 1956. In the decades following 1789, or 1917, there was little "academic" or "scientific" writing about the French or the Russian Revolutions. There was, however, an extraordinary proliferation of *political* writing about them. People were writing in order to *take sides*—they were *for* or *against*. Those who were for invoked the French or Russian events as an example, invited the people in their countries to act like the Parisian population or the Petrograd workers, tried to explain and defend these actions against the reactionary ideologues of the times.

To be sure, the French and Russian Revolutions were "victorious" (though not for long), and the Hungarian Revolution was "defeated" (though this happened only because of the invasion of the country by the mightiest army on Earth). But so was the Paris Commune of 1871, and this did not prevent revolutionaries, over the ensuing half century, and still today, from celebrating its example and discussing its lessons. That the Hungarian Revolution was crushed by the Russian army might, perhaps, explain its lesser resonance among popular strata; *not* the systematic silence about it among "revolutionaries," and "left-wing intellectuals." Or is it that ideas cease to be true and valid when the Russian tanks start firing against them?

Things become clearer, nevertheless, when one considers the content, the meaning, the implications of the Hungarian Revolution. This silence can then be under-

stood for what it is: the direct consequence of the radical character of this revolution, and the attempt to repress its significance and its memory.

Modern society is a society of bureaucratic capitalism. The purest, total, most extreme form of bureaucratic capitalism has been achieved in Russia, China, and the other countries masquerading as "socialist." The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 has been the first and, until now, the only total revolution against total bureaucratic capitalism—foreshadowing the content and orientation of the future revolutions in Russia, China, etc. For decades, "Marxists," intellectuals of the "Left," militants, etc., have been—and still are—discussing the causes and exact date of the Russian "Thermidor," the degree of degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the social nature of the regime in Russia and the Eastern European countries. (Are they degenerated workers' states? Degenerated nonworkers' states? Socialist states with capitalist deformations? Capitalist states with socialist deformations?) The Hungarian workers and youth took to arms and put a final practical end to these discussions. They demonstrated through their deeds that the difference between the workers and the "workers' state" is the difference between life and death, and that they would rather die fighting against the "workers' state" than live as workers under a "workers' state."

Like the fragmented bureaucratic capitalism of the West, the total bureaucratic capitalism of the East is full of contradictions and torn by permanent social conflict. Contradictions and conflict recurrently reach acute levels, and the system heads toward an open crisis. The pressure of the exploited and oppressed population may ~~reach a point of explosion. Or, before that, the ruling bureaucracy may attempt some~~ "reforms." The fields where contradictions and conflict make themselves most manifest, and in the most pressing manner, are, of course, "economics" and "politics." The near-permanent economic chaos, which is consubstantial with bureaucratic "planning" and which is rooted, more deeply, in the fundamental conflict in production,[2] and the omnipresent political repression appear as the more intolerable aspects of total bureaucratic capitalism. These two aspects are, obviously, highly interdependent and reciprocally conditioned—and both necessarily result from the system's social structure. Fantastic as this may sound, they seem to be considered as secondary blemishes or reformable defects by virtually the whole of the international "Left." Thus, "reforms" that would eliminate them while preserving the substance of the system (a new case of squaring the circle) are welcomed by the [Communist] candidate bureaucrats of the West and their open or disguised ideologues ("socialists"; dissident and now even "orthodox communists" in Italy, France, and elsewhere; Trotskyists; "progressive" journalists; various types of intellectual fellow travelers, from existentialist philosophers of yesterday like Sartre and the *Les Temps Modernes* team to "radical economists" of today like [D. M.] Nuti, etc.). It is not difficult to understand why and how these strange bedfellows were more or less unanimous in their support for Gomulka in 1956–57 and in their "opposition" to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, whereas, with regard to the Hungarian Revolution, they resorted to shameful slanders (the "Communists"), approved the final Russian invasion (Sartre), frowned upon the "spasmodic," "elementary," and "spontaneous" actions of the Hungarian workers ([Ernest] Mandel) or retreated into silence as quickly as they could. In Poland in 1956 the people did not take up arms. Despite their development and their effervescence, the workers' coun-

cils never explicitly questioned the existing structure of power. The Communist party succeeded, at the price of a minor self-purge and of some personnel changes, in keeping the situation in its essentials under control through the entire critical period—and thus in stifling, eventually, the mass movement.[3] Things were even more clear in Czechoslovakia in 1968—and the protests of the "Left" even louder. You see, in this case there was no danger, virtually no sign of autonomous activity on the part of the masses. The Communist party's (CP) new leadership was attempting to introduce some "democratic" reforms and a degree of decentralization into the economy. It goes without saying that the population could not but favor these measures. A reform from above, with the support of the people—what a golden dream for today's "revolutionaries"! As Mandel would say, this would "have allowed millions of proletarians to identify themselves again with the Workers' State." Under these circumstances, it is of course permissible to blame the Russian tanks.

In Hungary, however, the movement of the masses was so powerful and so radical that both the CP and the whole of the existing state apparatus were literally pulverized in a few days. There was not even a "dual power"; whatever power there was, it rested with the armed youth and the workers' councils. The "Program"[4] of the workers' councils was totally incompatible with the conservation of the bureaucratic structure of society. It asked for the self-management of the enterprises, abolition of work norms, a drastic reduction in income inequalities, control over general planning activities, control over the composition of the government, a new orientation for the country's foreign policy. And all this was agreed upon and clearly formulated *in the span of a few days*. To remark that some point in these demands was "unclear" and that others were "inadequate" would be, in the context, ludicrously irrelevant. Had the Revolution not been crushed by the Kremlin murderers, its development would have forced the necessary "clarifications" and "completions" and would have shown if the councils and the people were or were not able to find in themselves the capacity and the strength to establish a new structure of power and a new institution of society.

At the same time, the Revolution was freeing and unleashing all the forces and tendencies of the Hungarian nation. Freedom of speech and organization for all, irrespective of one's particular political creed, were immediately considered self-evident. And, just as self-evident, this was considered intolerable by the various representatives of "progressive humanity" in our time. Freedom of speech and organization was seen as a sign of the "impure," "mixed," "confused" character of the Hungarian Revolution—when it was not cynically presented as the "proof" that the Revolution was nothing but an "imperialist conspiracy." One might wonder as to why capitalist imperialism can stand freedom of speech most of the time, and "socialist" imperialism cannot stand it for a single moment. But let us leave aside the problem of freedom as such. What is the historical and sociological meaning of this extraordinary proliferation of parties, organizations, etc., in the span of a few days? Precisely this: that a genuine revolution was taking place. This proliferation, and the expression of the corresponding spectrum of ideas, *is* indeed *the* distinctive mark of the Revolution. It is not despite, but because of, this unlimited manifestation of political tendencies, of this "chaotic" (for the bureaucrats and philistines) character of the social explosion, that we recognize in the Hungarian events of 1956 a revolu-

tion. It is—rather, it ought to be—a commonplace that a true revolution is always national: all sections and strata of the nation abandon their passivity and conformity to the old order, all strive to take an active part in its destruction and in the shaping of the new order. The whole of the heretofore oppressed society seizes the opportunity to express itself, everybody stands up and speaks out loud his ideas and his demands. (That *we* may disagree with many of them, and say so equally loudly, is a totally different matter.) This is what happened during the French Revolution after 1789, and in the Russian Revolution after February 1917 (the very suspect and intolerable mess created by both would have been, very probably, condemned on grounds of "impurity," "confusion," etc., by the critics of the Hungarian Revolution). The revolution is this state of overheating and fusion of society, accompanied by the general mobilization of all categories and strata and the breaking up of all established barriers. It is this character that makes understandable the extraordinary liberation and multiplication of the creative potential of society during revolutionary periods, the breaking up of the repetitious cycles of social life, the sudden *opening* of history.

Despite its short life span, the Hungarian Revolution has posited organizational forms and social significations that represent a social-historical institutional *creation*. The source of this creation was the activity of the Hungarian people—intellectuals, students, workers. "Theoreticians" and "politicians" as such did not contribute anything to it; they rather continued to bring the Hungarian people deceit and mystification. The intellectuals played an important positive role, since they started, months before the final outburst (in the Petőfi Circle and elsewhere), to *demolish* the "political," "ideological," and "theoretical" nonsense by means of which the Stalinist bureaucracy was presenting its totalitarian dictatorship as "people's democracy" and "socialism." They played this role not by "bringing to the people" a new, ready-to-wear "truth," but by courageously exposing the old lies for what they were. New, positive truths were created by the people during and by means of their autonomous activity. I call them positive because they were *embodied* in actions and organizational forms, designed not only for the struggle *against* exploitation and oppression by the bureaucracy, but as new forms of organization of the collective life on the basis of new principles. These principles entail a radical break with the established social structures (East or West) and, once made explicit, make nonsense of the inherited political "philosophy" and "theory." This, in turn, overthrows the traditional relationship between "theory" and "practice"—as well as between "theoretical" and plain people. In the Hungarian Revolution—as in some other previous historical instances—we find a new point of departure, a new source, which both forces us to reflect anew the problem of *politics*—that is, of the total institution of society—in the modern world and provides us with some of the means for doing so.

At this point, some noises about "spontaneism" if not about "obscurantist demagoguery" may be heard. Before answering these charges, let us take a look at the contributions of distinguished theoreticians and politicians before or during the 1956 events. Consider, for instance, György Lukács. He certainly was one of the very few creative Marxist theoreticians who appeared after Marx. What did *he* do? From about 1924 until 1956 he *provided cover*, ideologically speaking, for Stalin and

Stalinism, the Moscow Trials, the Gulag, "socialist realism," and developments in Hungary since 1945; he implemented, successively, the orders of Zinoviev, Bukharin, Zhdanov, [Josef] Rêvai, etc. He did so *in full knowledge*—of the facts, *and* of "the most revolutionary conception history has ever produced," Marxism.[5] When did he dare to start seeing the light? When, spontaneously and *against* the implications of his theoretical teaching, the masses erupted. He spent his life swearing by *die List der Vernuft*—the Cunning of Reason, and made himself into an extreme impersonation of *die Unlist der blossen Vernuft*—the blindness of sheer "reason."

Or consider Imre Nagy, the "politician." What help did he offer—where was his "political" cunning against the treacherous lies of the Russian bureaucracy? Did he, for a single moment, find in himself the clarity of mind and the resolve to speak out loud these words: Whatever happens, never believe the Russians— and I know what I am talking about? No. He muddled through, and tried to ask for help . . . from the United Nations! History in the making and its bloody drama were, if ever, there in person: armored tanks and guns facing the naked hands and breasts of millions of people. And Nagy the "statesman," the *Realpolitiker*, could only think of the United Nations, the sinister *guignol* theater where the Washington and the Moscow bandits, assisted by their respective second- or third-order ruffians, make speeches against each other in public and carry out their dirty business in the corridors.

Such was the output of the nonspontaneous, conscious, learned, and highly skilled professionals of theory and politics. The output of the nonprofessionals was a radical revolution—not foreseen, not prepared, not organized by anybody and, so, "spontaneous," like all revolutions in history.

The Hungarian people did not act "spontaneously" in the sense a baby cries "spontaneously" if hurt. They acted out of their social and historical experience, and made something out of it. Now, when the self-styled "theoretician" or "revolutionary" looks contemptuously at what he calls "spontaneity," the hidden postulate in the back of his mind is this: it is impossible that this rabble could ever learn anything from their lives, draw any sensible conclusions, put two and two together—let alone bring forward new ideas and try to find *their* solutions to *their* problems. The essential identity of this postulate with the basic tenets of the ruling classes, over thousands of years, concerning society and man hardly needs to be stressed.

A long parenthesis seems necessary here. One cannot help being struck by the fact that "Marxist" and "leftist" intellectuals continue to spend their time and energy writing on and on about the relation between Volume 1 and Volume 3 of *Das Kapital*, commenting on and reinterpreting this or that comment on Marx by this or that interpreter of Marx, heaping glosses on glosses of *books*—and hardly ever consider actual history, the effective creation of forms and meanings in and through the activity of people. Thus history is, once again, reduced to the history of ideas—and a very narrow set of ideas at that. One of the consequences is that history tends to be less and less understood. For history is not just the array of historical "facts"; what matters, from a revolutionary point of view, is the *interpretation* of these facts, which cannot be left to the historians of the university establishment. Certainly, this interpretation is a function both of the "theoretical ideas" and of the political project of the interpreter. But it is the organic connection between these three elements: the project, the ideas, and the full consideration of actual history as a *source* (and

not as dead material) that is the distinctive trait of the work of a revolutionary intellectual and that can only mark his radical departure from the traditional, dominant conception of "theoretical work." And it is this connection that is in fact severed in 99 percent of "left-wing" literature today.

Much more, however, is involved here. For both the project and the ideas have their origin in actual history, in the creative activity of people in modern society. The revolutionary project is not a logical inference from a correct theory. Rather, the successive theories in this field are attempts at a universal formulation of that which masses of people, over the last two hundred years, workers at first, then women, students, national minorities, etc., have expressed in their struggle against the established institution of society—be it during revolutions, or in the factory, or in their day-to-day lives. By "forgetting" this fact, the "revolutionary" intellectual lands himself in a ridiculous contradiction. He proclaims that his theory enables him to understand and even to judge history—while seemingly ignoring that the essential *source* of his theory is the past historical activity of people. In this way, he blinds himself to this activity as it manifests itself *in the present*. For example, the Hungarian Revolution.

To drive home the point, consider the work of Marx. Had this work been just "a synthesis" of classical German philosophy, English political economy, and French utopian socialism, it would have remained just another theory. The difference comes from the political ideas that animated Marx. But what is the source of these ideas? There is virtually *nothing* among them—at any rate, nothing retaining any relevance and value today—that can be attributed to Marx himself. Virtually all of it has its source in the working-class movement as it was forming itself between 1800 and 1840; virtually all of it is already there, black on white, in the English working-class literature of this time.[6] And what was the only "addition" Marx was able to make, to his political ideas, after the *Communist Manifesto?* The idea of the destruction of the existing state apparatus and the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—which was, as he himself pointed out, the lesson of the Paris Commune, a lesson embodied in the activity of the Parisian workers and, first and foremost, in the new institutional form they created: the Commune itself. This creation Marx had not been able to foresee—despite his theory and despite his genius. Being Marx, and "not a Marxist," he was able to recognize it—after the event.[7]

Let us return to our main argument. What would be "nonspontaneity," to what is "spontaneity" opposed? Would it be to "consciousness"? But is anybody saying that the Hungarian workers, for instance, were *un*conscious? In what sense? Sleepwalkers? Under the influence of LSD? Zombies? Or is it that they were not conscious "enough"—or not "in the proper way"? But what, then, is "enough" consciousness—or "the proper way" of being conscious? Mr. Mandel's, perhaps? Or Mr. Sartre's? Or would it be Absolute Knowledge? Whose? Is there anybody around representing it? And what is he *doing* with it? We do know, anyhow, what Kautsky and Lenin have done with their knowledge.

Or is the opposite of "spontaneity" organization? But the question is precisely: *What* organization, and *whose* organization? The "spontaneous" action of the Hungarian workers and people was action *toward organization*, and even more: their spontaneity was exactly that, *their self-organization*. And this is also what the bureau-

crat pseudotheoretician hates the most: that the workers *organize themselves* in workers' councils—instead of waiting, in enthusiastic passivity, for him to come and "organize" them. And how does he organize them, if he is given a chance? Like the dominant classes have done, for centuries, in factories and in armies. This he does, clearly, if and when he takes power, but also before that—in a big union, for instance, or in a "Bolshevik party," where structure, form, and content of relations simply reproduce the relations extant in capitalist society: hierarchy, division between a stratum of directors and a mass of executants, veil of pseudoknowledge cast over the power of a self-coopting and self-perpetuating bureaucracy, and so on—that is, the form appropriate for the reproduction and perpetuation of political alienation (and, by way of consequence, of overall alienation). If the opposite of "spontaneity"—that is, of self-activity and self-organization—is *hetero*-organization, organization by politicians, "theoreticians," "professional revolutionaries," etc.—then, clearly, the opposite of "spontaneity" is *counter*revolution, or conservation of the existing order.

The revolution is exactly that, self-organization of the people. By the same token, it obviously presupposes a becoming-conscious of the essential characteristics and mechanisms of the established system, and of the desire and the will to invent a new solution to the problem of the institution of society. (It is clear, for instance, that the understanding the Hungarian workers did possess, in act, of the social character of the bureaucracy as an exploitative and oppressive class, *and* of the conditions for its existence, was, *from a theoretical point of view*, infinitely superior to all the pseudotheoretical analyses contained in thirty years of Trotskyist literature and in most of the other "left-wing Marxist" writings.) Self-organization is here *self-organizing*, and consciousness is *becoming-conscious*; both are *processes*, not *states*. It is not that people have finally found "the" appropriate form of social organization, but rather that they realize that this "form" *is* their activity of organizing themselves, in accordance with their understanding of the situation and of the ends they set for themselves. In this sense, the revolution cannot but be "spontaneous," both in its inception and in its unfolding. For the revolution *is* explicit self-institution of society. "Spontaneity" here means nothing else but creative social-historical activity at its highest expression, that which has as its object the institution of society itself. Of this, all the revolutionary outbursts of modern times offer indisputable instances.

No historical action is "spontaneous" in the sense of arising in a vacuum, of being totally unrelated to its conditions, its environment, its past. And every important historical action is spontaneous precisely in the pristine sense of the word: *spons*, source.[8] History is creation—and this means emergence of that which is not already contained in its "causes," "conditions," et cetera, which is not repetition, neither *stricto sensu* nor in the sense of a "variant" of the already given, but position of new forms and figures and of new meanings—that is, *self-institution*. To put it in a more narrow, more pragmatic, more operational way: spontaneity is the excess of the "result" over the "causes."[9]

The Hungarian workers acted from their experience—and their action was an *elaboration*, in a nontrivial sense, of this experience. But this action was not a "necessary," causally determined reaction or response to the given situation, any more than *this* elaboration was the result of a "logical" process of deduction, inference, or the

like. In half a dozen Eastern European countries the general conditions to which one might try to impute the 1956 explosion were present in essentially similar form for quite a few years, and, for that matter, in Russia itself for a much longer period of time. That they had been essentially similar is, after all, proved by the events in East Germany in 1953, Poland in 1956 (and 1970 and 1976), Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as by the more limited and less well known revolts in Russia (e.g., Novocherkassk). However, it is only in Hungary that the activity of the people reached the level of intensity that could produce a revolution. That Hungary and the Hungarian people are particular is certain. So is every country and every people. We all know that all individual entities are absolutely singular and, in this respect, absolutely alike. The "particularities" of Hungarian history, etc., are of no help in trying to "explain" exhaustively why this particular form of revolution took place in this particular country at this particular moment.[10] A concrete historical investigation can, of course, help in "rendering intelligible"—ex post facto: one should never forget the endless problems entailed by this clause—a considerable part of the concatenations between events, actions, and reactions of people, etc. It can *never* jump from this description and partial understanding of conditions, motivations, actions, etc., to the "explanation of the result."

Thus, for instance, a revolution is "caused" by exploitation and oppression. But exploitation and oppression have been there all the time, for centuries (thousands of years). Then, exploitation and oppression have to reach an "extreme point." ~~Which is this "extreme point"? And has it not been reached, recurrently, without~~ a revolution ensuing? Then again, this has to coincide with an "internal crisis" of the ruling classes, the crumbling or collapse of the regime. But what more crumbling and collapse could you want than the state of most of Europe after 1918—or after 1945? In the end, the masses must have reached a sufficient level of consciousness and combativeness. And what determines the level of consciousness and combativeness of the masses? The revolution has not taken place, because the conditions for a revolution were not ripe. The most important of these conditions is a sufficient level of consciousness and combativeness on the part of the masses. Sufficient for what? Well, sufficient for making a revolution. In short, a revolution has not taken place because a revolution has not taken place. This is the gist of "Marxist" (and any "deterministic" or "scientific") wisdom on the matter.[11]

Things are even clearer when one considers not the "revolt" as explosion and destruction of the old order, but the revolution as a self-organized activity aiming at the institution of a new order. (The distinction is, of course, a separating abstraction.) In other words, when one considers the *positive content* of what I called before an elaboration of the experience. The intolerable old state of affairs could have been met with an additional dose of resignation. Or by a revival of religious sentiment. Or by demands for more or less "moderate" reforms. Instead, the movement short-circuited all other "solutions," and people started fighting and dying for a wholesale reconstruction of society. It would be a hard task for a theoretician to try to prove that this was the *only* "logical" and/or "feasible" alternative to the Hungarian state of affairs in 1956; innumerable instances to the contrary have been and continue to be provided by many countries in the world. The positive content of workers' councils, the demands for self-management and abolition of work norms, etc., was not

a deduction, inference, choice of "the only other alternative," etc. It was an elaboration that *transcended* the given (and all that is given with the given, implied or contained in it) and posited something new.

That this something new stands in a deep, organic relationship to the previous creations of the working-class movement and the content of other phases of revolutionary activity does not limit its importance; on the contrary. It emphasizes that the Hungarian Revolution belongs to the series of struggles, now going on for almost two centuries, that aim at the radical reconstruction of society. It shows in the activity of the Hungarian people a new moment in the unfolding of the revolutionary project—and, at the same time, ensures that its creations possess a significance that transcends, by far, the particular moment and conditions of their birth.

The forms of organization created by the Hungarian workers—the councils—belong to the same type as the forms created previously and elsewhere by working-class revolutions. The aims and demands formulated by these councils are in line with the aims and demands advanced by the whole history of the working-class movement, be it in formal structures or in the informal day-to-day fight going on in the factories of the world, whereas on certain basic points (self-management, abolition of work norms) they are more explicit and more radical. There is, thus, in the modern world a *unity* of the revolutionary project. This unity, again, we can render "more intelligible" by pointing to historical inheritance and continuity, to the similarity of the conditions in which the working class is placed by the social system, in particular of conditions of life and work. Although these factors are relevant and important, they can never give us the sum of "necessary and sufficient conditions" for the production of the content of the "responses" in 1871, 1905, 1917, 1919, 1936–37—or, indeed, for the failure of such a production in other instances. For what we have here is not an "objective" unity, not a unity as the identity of a class of "effects" stemming from a class of "identical causes," but a unity in the making, in the making of itself, a unity *making itself* (and, of course, *not yet made*): a unity of social-historical creation.

Without minimizing the importance of the numerous other aspects of the Hungarian Revolution, I shall concentrate here on the significance of the workers' councils and of some of their aims and demands. In discussing what I consider to be the potential meaning of the councils and of their demands, *I* am interpreting; so is, of course, anybody else talking about this subject or any other. I am interpreting, in connection with my own political position and perspective—and with the ideas I have been able to form. I am interpreting the Hungarian events of 1956—which are "particular" and "extreme." I hold that it is in these "particular" and "extreme" events that we can best see—beyond the blur of the habitual and the banal—the undiluted, concentrated, corrosive potentialities of the present historical situation. (In the same way, May 1968 in France was "particular" and "extreme"—and it is *because* of this, because it was a *limit situation,* that new potentialities were revealed, nay, created, during and through the May 1968 events.) Finally, these events lasted only a few weeks. I hold that these weeks—like the few weeks of the Paris Commune—are, *for us,* no less important and no less meaningful than three thousand years of Egyptian pharaonic history.

And I hold this to be so because I hold that what is contained potentially in the constitution and the aims of the Hungarian workers' councils is the destruction of the traditional, inherited, instituted social significations of *political power*, on the one hand, and of *production and work*, on the other hand, and therefore the germ of a new institution of society. This entails, in particular, a radical break with the inherited philosophy of politics and of work.

The workers' councils were formed almost everywhere, and they covered the country in a matter of hours. Their exemplary character does *not* stem from their being *workers'* councils; it is not linked to their "proletarian composition," to their springing from "productive enterprises," or even to the external aspects of the council "form" as such. Their decisive importance lies in (a) the establishment of *direct democracy*—in other terms, of *true political equality* (equality as to power); (b) their rootedness in existing concrete collectivities (which need not be only the "factories"); and (c) their demands relative to *self-management* and the abolition of work norms. Implied in these points is a striving toward the abolition of the established *division* of society and of the *essential separation* between the main spheres of collective activity. Involved here are not only the division between "classes," but the division between the "rulers" and the "ruled" (including the division between "representatives" and "represented"); the division between a separate "government" or narrow "political" sphere and the rest of social life, and especially "work" and "production"; and the division between immediate, day-to-day interests and activities, on the one hand, and a "political universal," on the other hand. Abolition of the division and of the essential separation does *not*, of course, mean the establishment of an undifferentiated "identity" of each and of all, of a "homogeneous" society, etc. (*This* dilemma—*either* society is antagonistically divided, *split* one way or the other, *or* there is total homogeneity and a general lack of differentiation—is one of the hidden postulates of the inherited political thought, *and* is shared by Marx, for whom the elimination of the division of society and of state power, politics, etc., will result from the homogenization of society brought about by capitalism.) Abolition of division and separation entails the recognition of the differences between segments of the community (the negation of these differences by abstract universals like "citizen," "proletarian," "consumer," etc., reestablishes this separation within each and every individual), and requires another type of *articulation* of these segments.

In the council organization all decisions have to be made—in principle, and whenever this is materially possible—by the whole collective of the people concerned, that is, by the general assembly of the "constituency" (be it a factory, an administration, a university, or a district). A body of delegates ensures the implementation of the decisions of the general assembly and the continuity of the direction of common affairs in between its meetings. The delegates are elected and permanently revocable (i.e., subject at any moment to instant recall). But neither this permanent revocability, nor even the election of the delegates are here decisive. There could be other means (e.g., rotation) to achieve the same end. The important point is that the power to decide rests with the general assembly, which can reverse decisions of the delegates, and that the "power" of the delegates is *residual*, that is, it exists only insofar as the general assembly cannot be in session around the clock every day.

This power of the general assemblies means, immediately, the abolition of the

instituted division between the "rulers" and the "ruled." In particular, it eliminates the prevalent (and typically modern, *not* ancient) political mystification that democracy is equivalent to representation—by which, of course, is meant *permanent* representation. Being an irrevocable (even if, formally, limited in time) delegation of power from the "represented" to the "representatives," representation is a form of political alienation. Political power is expropriated from the "represented" and appropriated by the "representatives." To decide is to decide oneself. It is *not* to "decide" who is going to decide. This expropriation is veiled by the juridical form of periodical elections. The well-known critique of "elections" under present social and political systems needs no repeating here. It is more important, perhaps, to stress a generally neglected point. Political "representation" tends to "educate"—that is, diseducate—people in the conviction that they could not manage the problems of society, that there exists a particular category of men endowed with the specific ability to "govern." Permanent representation goes with "professionalized politics." Thus, it contributes to political apathy, which in turn widens the gap, in people's minds, between the extent and the complexity of the problems of society and their own ability to tackle them.

Needless to add, neither the power of general assemblies nor the revocability and accountability of delegates is a panacea, "guaranteeing" that the revolution will not degenerate in bureaucratic or other fashion. The development, and ultimate fate, of the councils or any other autonomous organ depends on the self-mobilization and self-activity of the masses, on what people will and will not do, on their participation and involvement in the life of the collective organs, on their readiness to bring their full weight to bear during the processes of discussion, elaboration, decision, implementation, control. It would be a contradiction in terms to seek an institutional form that would, by its own virtue, ensure this participation, that would coerce people to be autonomous and constrain them to be self-activating. The council form—or any other analogous form—does not, and cannot, *guarantee* the development of such an autonomous activity; rather, *it makes this development possible.* The established political forms—be it "representative democracy," or the power, or even the "leadership," of a party—*guarantee* that such a development would be *impossible* and *make it* impossible by their very existence. What is here at stake is the "deprofessionalization" of politics, the abolition of politics as a special and separate sphere of activity and skill, and, conversely, the universal *politicization* of society, which means just that: the business of society is, in act and not in words, everybody's business. (This is the exact opposite of Plato's definition of justice: *Ta seatou prattein kai me polupragmonein,* to do one's own business and not to mess around with all sorts of things.)

A revolutionary phase starts necessarily with an outburst of autonomous activity on the part of the people, and, if it proceeds beyond the stage of a "revolt" or a "revolutionary episode," it goes on to establish autonomous mass organs. It displays a tremendous amount of activity and passion, abnegation, and "self-sacrifice," an extraordinary expenditure of energy. Individuals become actively interested in public affairs as if these were their own personal affairs—and *this is indeed what they actually are.* Thus, the revolution manifests itself to society as the unveiling of its own repressed truth. This deployment goes hand in hand with almost miraculous, un-

believable feats and performances of social, political, practical, and technical inspiration and invention (abundantly illustrated once more during the Hungarian Revolution and, not least, by the audacity and skill with which the Hungarian workers' councils went on fighting [János] Kadar for more than a month after the second Russian invasion and the total occupation of the country by a huge Russian army).

The continuation and further development of the autonomous activity of the people itself depends upon the character and the scope of the power of the mass organs, the relevance of the matters decided upon for the concrete existence of people, the difference that the decisions taken make or fail to make for their lives. (In this sense, the main problem of postrevolutionary society is the creation of institutions that allow the continuation and the development of this autonomous activity, without requiring heroic feats twenty-four hours a day.) The more people can see in their actual experience that their day-to-day existence depends crucially on their active participation in the exercise of power, the more they will tend to participate in this exercise. The development of self-activity feeds upon itself. Conversely, any limitation of the power of the autonomous mass organs, or any attempt to transfer a "part" of this power to other instances (Parliament, "party," etc.), can only favor the opposite movement, toward lesser participation, declining interest vis-à-vis the common affairs, and finally apathy. The bureaucratization process starts when part of the decisions pertaining to common affairs are removed from the competence of the mass organs and, under various rationalizations, entrusted to specific bodies. If this is allowed to happen, the participation of people and the activity of the mass organs will inevitably decline. The ensuing vacuum will be filled by more bureaucratic instances that will "have to" decide upon more and more matters. Eventually, people will abandon the mass organs where nothing of substance is decided on any more, and revert to the state of cynical indifference toward "politics," which is not only characteristic of present societies *but the very condition of their existence.* This state of affairs will then appear, to sociologists and philosophers, both to "explain" and to "justify" the bureaucracy (after all, somebody has to take care of public affairs).[12]

Now, people's concrete lives and day-to-day existence depend, inseparably, *both* on what is going on at the "general" social, political level *and* on what is happening in the particular collectivity to which they belong and the specific activities in which they are engaged. The separation and antagonism of these two spheres is an essential expression of separation and alienation in present-day society. Here lies the importance of the Hungarian workers' councils' demand for self-management and for the constitution of councils in all sectors of national life. A "participation" in general political power that leaves people powerless over their immediate environment and the management of their concrete activities is, of course, a mystification. And so is a "participation" or "self-management" confined, for example, to the business enterprise while leaving "general political power" in the hands of a separate stratum. What is entailed by the demands of the Hungarian workers' councils is the overcoming of this separation and opposition: that people manage the concrete collectivities to which they belong—and not only in "factories," but "in all sectors of national life," *and* that they participate in political power *not* under another guise, as "citizens" who vote, etc., *but* through the very organs of management that were their direct expression, namely, the councils.[13] Thus, the abstract dilemma divi-

sion/homogenization of society is eliminated; what we are led to is a mode of *articulation* between total society and the particular segments composing it.

Thus, irrespective of any other considerations, one can see clearly through the mystifications of the Yugoslav "workers' councils" and "self-management of business enterprises." There can be no "self-management of business enterprises" if a separate state apparatus and power are maintained; *even* in the narrow field of the "management of the business enterprise," the initiative and activity of the people are stunted and finally destroyed if they are confined to some secondary points concerning the operation of the factory (and, essentially, the increase of its output), when the "League of Yugoslavian Communists" retains total power over all important matters, and so, finally, *over what is happening in the factories themselves*. One can also see, conversely, why the power of the councils or other council-like organs (e.g., soviets in Russia after October 1917) will rapidly become a hollow form if they are confined to "political" power and matters in the narrow, current sense of the word. This was the line Lenin was advocating *on paper* when he spoke about "soviet power"; in actual fact, of course, he was striving to get all power for the Bolshevik party, and he succeeded. For then the division between a "political" sphere, in the traditional sense, and the concrete existence of people is reintroduced and reaffirmed. If the councils or the soviets are called upon only to vote laws and decrees and to nominate commissars, all they obtained was the abstract shadow of power. Thus, separated from the everyday life of people and from their activities in the factory and in work, having a more and more distant relation with the interests and preoccupations of concrete collectivities, busying themselves (or rather, *being supposed* to busy themselves) with distant, general governmental affairs, the soviets were bound to appear rapidly in the eyes of the population (even if they had not been dominated and manipulated by the Bolshevik party) as just another "official instance" not belonging to them, not caring about what *they* cared about.[14]

When I speak about autonomous organs of the masses, I do not call them autonomous only because, for example, they do not "obey" given individuals or parties or the "government." I call them autonomous because and insofar as *they do not accept the established institution of society*. This means, in particular, first, that they do not accept, outside themselves, any other source of legitimate power; and, second, that they abolish, within themselves, the division between those who direct and those who execute. The first point does not just imply either that they create a situation of "dual power" or even that they tend to assume for themselves all power, but that the autonomous organs posit themselves as the only legitimate source of decisions, rules, norms, and law—that is, as organs *and* as embodiment of a new institution of society. The second point entails that they abolish, through their deeds, the division between a "sphere of politics," or of "government," and a "sphere of everyday life" as essentially and antagonistically separated—or, in other words, the division between the specialists of the universal and the specialists of drilling, boring, plumbing, plowing, and so on. This second point *is* in fact the concrete implementation of the first in the field that is, immediately, of the greatest importance. For, the institution of "historical" societies, over thousands of years, in the political field, and the core schema of the institution of social relations in all other fields, has been the institution of a *hierarchy* between men. This institution has been, inseparably, a "real-

material" institution, embodied in social networks and individual positions, instrumented in possessions, privileges, rights, spheres of competence, tools, and weapons; and of a social imaginary signification, or rather, of a magma of social imaginary significations—the kernel of which differs among particular societies—whereby people are defined, conceived, and "acted," reciprocally *and* for themselves, as "superior" and "inferior" along one or several socially instituted lines of order. The internalization, by each and every individual, of this hierarchical ordering—even more: the virtual *impossibility* for any individual to think of himself and of the others and even *to exist*, socially and psychically, without placing himself at some point on this hierarchical order (be it the lowest) has been and remains a cornerstone of the institution of society. Contemporary bureaucratic capitalism tends to push hierarchical organization to its limit, and to give it the most universal form and the purest expression, when it posits this form of organization as the "rational" organization par excellence.[15] In two main areas, the hierarchical, pyramid-like structure of "organization," omnipresent in contemporary society, is replacing the traditional bipartition of capitalist society. Hierarchy has replaced this duality completely, for more than fifty years now, in Russia, and over the last quarter century in Eastern Europe and China. This *is* the dominant form of exploitative and oppressive relations in the world today.[16]

This structure and the significations consubstantial with it are refused and refuted by the council-like organizations. By vesting with power all those who are concerned, the hierarchical structure and division between those who direct and those who are confined to tasks of execution is destroyed. It thus materializes full political equality. Decisions are not made by specialists of specialized disciplines, or by specialists of the universal. They are made by the collective of the people who will have to implement them, and who, therefore, are in the best position to judge, not only about abstract "optimalities" of means in relation to ends, but also about the concrete conditions of this implementation and, above, all, its real costs—their own effort and work. This entails, for example, in the sphere of production, that matters relating to a particular place of work— say a shop in a factory—and not interfering with the activities of other shops have to be decided by the people in this shop. In the same way, matters concerning many shops, or a department, have to be decided by the people of these shops, or of the department; and matters pertaining to the factory as a whole, by the general assembly of people working in the factory or by their elected and revocable delegates. The relevance, correctness, etc., of the decisions made can thus be judged by those most concerned in a minimum of time and at minimum cost, and experience, both on these matters *and* on the actual exercise of direct democracy, can start building up. This is another illustration of what I called articulation.

[1979: "No taxation without representation": this slogan of the rising bourgeoisie in its struggle with the monarchy perfectly and profoundly expresses the mind-set and the world structures the bourgeoisie was in the process of creating in its classical home territory. *No execution of decisions without an equal part played by all in the making of decisions* is one of the fundamental principles of a self-managed society, and follows immediately from the demands and activity of the Hungarian workers' councils.]

The abolition of the *division* and antagonism between specialists and non-specialists does not mean, of course, the suppression of their *difference*. Self-management does not entail that "competence" and specialized "knowledge," wherever they exist and are meaningful, are neglected or not taken into account; *quite the contrary*. (In fact, it is under today's social structure that they are *not*, and that the decisions made there depend mostly on the outcome of the strife between bureaucratic cliques and clans, each of which uses "its" specialists for purposes of public justification and cover-ups.) Specialists are not eliminated as such. Technicians, engineers, accountants, and so on, belong to the collective of the factory—to stick to this example—and can and have to be listened to, like everybody else *and* in their specific capacity as technicians, etc. A general assembly is perfectly capable of listening to an engineer who says, "If you want A, I don't know of any other way of doing it than X and Y; and I remind you that the choice of X will entail Z, the choice of Y will entail V and W." But it is the assembly, not the engineer, that will have to decide to do or not to do A, *and* to choose between X and Y. Can they be proved wrong? Certainly. But hardly more so than, for example, Pan American Airways. There, management, availing itself of the expert advice of hundreds of technicians, statisticians, computer experts, econometricians, transport economists, and so forth, extrapolated the demand curve for air transportation of the 1960s into the future—something a moderately intelligent first-year undergraduate would not have done—and landed themselves in near bankruptcy, from which they had to be rescued by the American government.

What is involved here is much more than the traditional statement of the limitations of any technical, specialized competence or knowledge, based on the separation between "means" and "ends" (more or less homologous to the separation between "values" and neutral or value-free "instruments"). This separation is an abstraction, possessing some validity only in fragmented and trivial domains—and, beyond that, a fallacy. We are not saying: people will have to decide *what* to do, and then technicians will tell them *how* to do it. We say: after listening to technicians, people decide what to do *and* how to do it. For the *how* is not neutral—and the *what* is not disembodied. What and how are neither *identical*, nor *external* to each other. A "neutral" technique is, of course, an illusion. A conveyor belt is linked to a type of product *and* a type of producer—and vice versa.[17]

The demand of the Hungarian workers' councils that work norms and standards be abolished, except where the workers themselves would decide otherwise, allows us to see this problem under a different angle and in a more concrete way—at the same time that it contains the seeds of a new conception of work, of man, and of their relationship. If the tasks have been decided on, and if the various technical "means"—instruments, materials, and so on—are taken as given, then living work itself seems to be just another "means" to be used in the most "rational" and "efficient" way. The "*how*" of this use appears to fall, self-evidently, within the province of the corresponding technicians, who have to determine "the one best way" of doing the work and the time allowed for doing it. The absurdity of the ensuing results, and the permanent strife thereby introduced into the work process, are known. We are not concerned here, however, with the critique of the irrational character of Taylorism and of the capitalist (and "socialist") "rationalization" of the

work process. Nor is the demand for the abolition of work norms and standards simply a means for the workers to defend themselves against exploitation, speedups, etc. The demand contains positive elements of paramount importance. It means that people charged with the implementation of a task are the ones entitled to make decisions concerning the rhythm of the work. This rhythm, conceived in the capitalist "rationalistic" framework as one of the moments in the implementation of a decision, as a part of the "means," is of course nothing of the sort: it is an essential dimension of the working life of the worker—that is, of his life *tout court*. And the workers cannot defend themselves against exploitation without *doing* something positive, relative to production itself. If externally imposed work norms and standards are abolished, the rhythm of work will still have to be regulated somehow, given the collective, cooperative character of modern production. The only conceivable instance of regulation is then the collective of the workers themselves. Groups of workers and workers' collectives on the shop floor, in departments, in the factory, will have to establish their own discipline and ensure its observance (as, indeed, they do informally and "illegally" already today). Implied here is the categorical rejection of the idea that "man strives to avoid labor . . . man is a fairly lazy animal" (Trotsky, in *Terrorism and Communism*)[18] and that discipline at work can be arrived at only through external coercion or by financial stimuli. The coercive organization of work in exploitative systems is not a response to the "laziness of man"; rather, this "laziness" is a natural and understandable response to exploited and alienated work.[19]

~~The germinal character of the demands concerning self-management and the abo-~~ lition of work norms can also be seen in another series of implications. Once the principle that power over activities belongs to those involved has been accepted and the separation between means and ends has been repudiated, it then follows that tools, machines, etc., can neither be taken as given nor imposed on the people using them by the engineers, technicians, etc., who would design them with a view solely toward "increasing productive efficiency," which in fact comes to mean: pushing even further the domination of the mechanical universe over men. A radical change in the relations of workers to work implies a radical change in the nature of the instruments of production; and, first and foremost, it implies that the point of view of the *users* of those instruments is the determinant one in the process of their conception and design. A conveyor-belt socialism would be a contradiction in terms, were it not a sinister mystification. Machines have to be adapted to men, not men to machines. This leads clearly to a repudiation of the basic characteristics of present-day technology—which is also required from the point of view of the changes necessary in the nature of the end-products of industry. Today's machines correspond to today's junk, and this junk requires this type of machinery. And both presuppose and tend to reproduce a certain type of man.

That numerous and by no means trivial problems would emerge along this road is of course clear. But nothing, as far as we can see, makes them insuperable—and certainly not *more* insuperable than the ones the present antagonistic institution of society creates every day. For instance, if the groups of workers themselves fix their own rhythm of work, there appears a problem both of "equality" of rhythms between different groups—in other words, of justice—and of integration of these various

rhythms into the total production process. Both these problems exist today, and they are *not*, in fact, "solved." A considerable degree of progress will be made when they are finally formulated and discussed explicitly. And it is likely that not only considerations of equity, but the interdependence of the various stages of the work process (and, in a stage that ought to follow rapidly, the rotation of people between shops, departments, etc.) would lead the workers' collective not to tolerate groups that would tend to make life too easy for themselves. In an analogous way, making machines according to the point of view of the users of machines would require a constant and close cooperation between machine makers and machine users. More generally, a collectivistic organization of production—and of all other social activities—implies, of course, a large measure of social responsibility and reciprocal control. The various segments of the community will have both to behave in a responsible way and to accept their role in the exercise of mutual control. Widespread and ongoing public discussion of problems shared in common and networks of delegates from the grass-roots organizations appear as the obvious instruments and vehicles for the coordination of social activities.

Here is not the place to discuss the even more general, important, and difficult questions a collectivistic, communitarian society will confront, such as those relating to the integration and orientation of the "overall economy" or of other social activities, to their mutual interdependence, to the general orientation of society, and so on.[20] In fact, as I have tried to emphasize for a long time now, the crucial problem for a postrevolutionary society is neither the problem of the "management of production" nor that of the "organization of the economy." It is the *political* problem proper—what might be called *the negative of the problem of the State*: society's capacity to establish and maintain its explicit and concrete *unity* without a separate and relatively autonomous instance charged with this "task"—the state apparatus. This problem, let me add parenthetically, was *in fact* ignored, despite appearances, in classical Marxism and by Marx himself. The idea that the State must be destroyed as a separate, nearly autonomous apparatus was *not* accompanied by a positive consideration of the political problem. Rather, this problem was made to "disappear" by providing the mythical perspective of an explicit, "material" unification and homogenization of society that the development of capitalism was supposed to bring about. "Politics" for Marx, Lenin, etc., concerns the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the alliance with other classes, etc.; in brief, the elimination of the "remnants of the ancient world," *not* the positive institution and organization of a new world. *For Marx, in a 100 percent proletarian society there would not and could not be a political problem*. (This is one of the meanings of his refusal to prepare "recipes for the socialist kitchens of the future.") And this is deeply rooted in his whole philosophy of history: perhaps socialism *or* barbarism, but, if *not* barbarism, then socialism—and socialism *is determined*. The wicked irony of history was that the first victorious revolution took place in a country where the population had been anything but "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself."[21] And the task of unifying and homogenizing Russian society had to be accomplished by the Bolshevik party and Stalin's totalitarian terror—fortunately, with less than total success.

But *we* cannot find the answer to the question of the unity of postrevolutionary

society in an "objective/subjective" process of homogenization that does not exist—nor could we do so even if it did exist. The political problem as such can never be eliminated. A unity of postrevolutionary society can be brought about—that means, constantly recreated—through the permanent *unifying activity* of the collective organs. This entails, of course, the destruction of any separate "state apparatus"—but also the existence and continuous remodeling of *political institutions*, for example, the councils and their networks—not *antagonistic* to the "real society," but neither direct and immediately *identical* to it. And there is, on this road, no magic guarantee that a social consensus will easily be elaborated and that all possible frictions between segments of the community will disappear; nor that, possibly helped by the tensions resulting from residual social antagonisms, a stratum would not emerge and attempt to occupy permanent positions of power, thus preparing a restoration of the division between directors and executants and of a separate state apparatus. But we cannot go beyond the following way of posing the question:

Either the people's autonomous collective organs will be able to invent a solution, or rather a *process* of solutions, to the problem of maintaining society together as a differentiated unity;

or, if the masses prove unable to progress in this direction, "substitute" solutions would, by necessity, be imposed—for example, the power of a "revolutionary party" and the reconstitution of a permanent bureaucracy. The "old rubbish" would then ipso facto be reestablished.

It is not that we do not know the way. There *is* no way—no way already in existence. The way will be opened, if and when it is, by the autonomous collective activity of the people. But we *do* know what is *not* the way—and what is the way leading to a totalitarian bureaucratic society.

The Hungarian Revolution was not given the time and the opportunity to face these problems. Nevertheless, in the short span of its development, it not only destroyed the ignoble mystification of Stalinist "socialism" but also posed some of the most important questions confronting the revolutionary reconstruction of human society and gave some germinal answers to them. We not only have to honor the heroic struggle of the Hungarian people; in their decision and resolve to manage for themselves their collective life and, to this end, to change radically an institution of society dating back to the origin of historical times, we have to recognize one of the creative sources of contemporary history.

August 1976

Notes

1. "La Révolution prolétarienne contre la bureaucratie," in *S. ou B.*, 20 (December 1956). [T/E: Reprinted in *SB 2*, pp. 277–78; now available as "The Proletarian Revolution against the Bureaucracy," in *PSW 2*, p. 62. For consistency's sake, I have cited my translation here. The first phrase in Castoriadis's typescript version of this citation reads somewhat differently: "Over the coming years, *all the questions that matter* will be condensed in this one."] The present text supposes on the part of the reader a certain familiarity with the principal facts relating to the events of 1956 in Hungary, and, in particular, the composition, activities, and demands of the workers' councils. Issues 20 (December 1956) and 21 (March 1957) of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* are in the main devoted to the events of 1956 in Hungary and Poland,

and contain documents and texts by refugees who participated in the Hungarian Revolution. For a few bibliographical indications, see *SB 2*, p. 265.

2. Cf. my article cited in note 1, especially pp. 62–75; also "On the Content of Socialism, III" (1958), in *PSW 2*. The extraordinary book by the Hungarian Miklos Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State* (New York: Universe, 1981), demonstrates, once again, the total *identity* of the nature of relations of production and organization of the work process as between "capitalist" factories in the West and "socialist" factories in the East.

3. I discussed, at the time, developments in Poland, in "La Voie polonaise de la bureaucratisation," *S. ou B.*, 21 (March 1957), reprinted now in *SB 2*, pp. 339–71 [T/E: not translated for the present series]. It is worth quoting at some length the inimitable Ernest Mandel, lest the reader think that I am indulging in polemical exaggerations: "Socialist democracy will still have to engage in more battles in Poland. But the principal battle, which allowed millions of proletarians *to identify themselves again with the Workers' State*, is already won. . . . The political revolution, which, for a month now, has been shaking up Hungary, has shown a more spasmodic and more unequal development than the political revolution in Poland. It did not, like the latter, fly from victory to victory [*sic*]. . . . This is because, contrary to what was the case in Poland, the Hungarian Revolution was an elementary and spontaneous explosion. The subtle interaction [!] between objective and subjective factors, between the initiative of the masses and *the building up of a new leadership*, between pressure from below and the *crystallization of an opposition fraction above, at the summit of the Communist party, interaction which made possible the Polish victory* [?!], has been missing in Hungary" (*Quatrième Internationale*, December 1956, pp. 22 and 23; emphases added [T/E: the article was published under Mandel's pseudonym, E. Germain]). Rarely have the bureaucratic essence of Trotskyism, its nature as a fraction of Stalinist bureaucracy in exile, its yearning to return to the party apparatus at the occasion of some factional struggle within it and of some "pressure from below" been expressed with more clarity—and in a more laughable style.

4. I am referring to the points I consider most important as they were already formulated October 28 and 29, 1956. Unbelievable as it may appear, the demands formulated by the councils after November 11 (i.e., after the complete occupation of the country by the Russian army and the murder of thousands of people) were even more radical, as they called for the constitution of armed workers' militia and the establishment of councils in all branches of activity, *including government administrations*.

5. I am not talking about the persons as such, but about the significance of their behavior. The personal tragedy of Lukács (or of [Imre] Nagy, etc.) is, in this context, irrelevant. For Lukács in particular, the Hegelian Marxist, to weep about his "subjective drama" would be to add insult to injury.

6. The material contained in E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964) abundantly illustrates this point.

7. It is all the more striking to note that, despite this precedent, and despite Marx's recognition of the fundamental importance of the *form* of the Commune, Lenin's initial reaction to the spontaneous emergence of the soviets in Russia during the 1905 Revolution was negative and hostile. People were doing something different from what he, Lenin, had decided (on the basis of his "theory") they ought to be doing.

8. This is a hypothetical reconstruction of a not directly confirmed initial meaning. In Latin, *spons* is not used in the nominative case; in the other cases, it is usually translated by "will." The Greek *spendo* (whence *sponde*), however, means to pour a liquid, to make a libation (like the Hittite *sipant, ispant*); its original meaning cannot easily be distinguished from *leibo, kheo*. Cf. E[mile] Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Coral Gables, Fl.: University of Miami Press, 1973), pp. 470ff. and 482 [1979 note].

9. The "identitary" postulate, which underlies all inherited philosophical and scientific thought, is equivalent to the assertion that such an excess, if and when it exists, is always "a measure of our ignorance." The presumption that goes with it is that this measure can, de jure, be reduced to zero. The shortest answer to this is, *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*. We can, confidently, sit back and relax waiting for the day when the difference between *Tristan und Isolde* and the sum total of its "causes" and "conditions" (the bourgeois society of the 1850s, the evolution of instruments and orchestra, Wagner's unconscious, etc.) will have been reduced to zero.

10. Though one can, of course, "explain" why this type of revolution did not take place in 1956 in Egypt, Iran, or Java.

11. For another illustration of this type of "argument": It is correct that one of the main differences

between Poland and Hungary in 1956 is that the Polish CP was able to "adapt" itself to the events—whereas the Hungarian CP was not. But *why* did the Polish CP succeed where the Hungarian CP failed? Precisely because in Poland the movement *did not go far enough*; this allowed the Polish CP to continue to exist, and to play its role, whereas in Hungary the violence and the radical character of the movement reduced the CP very rapidly to nothing. And this also "explains," up to a point, the different attitude of the Kremlin in the two cases. As long as the bureaucratic party remained alive and more or less in command in Poland, the Moscow bureaucracy believed—and rightly so—that it could spare itself an armed intervention and maneuver toward a gradual restoration of the bureaucratic dictatorship—which is what eventually took place. Such a maneuver seemed impossible in the case of Hungary, where the CP had been destroyed and the workers' councils were clearly showing their intention to demand and exercise power.

12. On a reduced scale, everybody has had the opportunity to observe this spiral of bureaucratic degeneration and apathy in the life of political organizations and trade unions in present-day society.

13. It is true that in Hungary demands for free elections to designate a new Parliament were formulated, and it seems that these demands had the support of the councils. This was, quite obviously, an understandable reaction to the previous state of affairs, the bureaucratic dictatorship. The question of the respective roles and power of this Parliament and the councils, had the Revolution been allowed to develop, must of course remain open. In my view, a development of the power and the activities of the councils would have brought about either a gradual atrophy of the Parliament, or a clash between the two.

14. Cf. my article, "Socialism or Barbarism" (1949) [T/E: now in *PSW 1*, in particular pp. 92–100]; also, "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy" (1964) [T/E: chapter 8 in this volume]. Unbelievable as it may sound, Lenin and Trotsky considered the organization of work, the management of production, etc., as purely *technical* questions that had nothing to do, according to them, with the "nature of the political power," which remained "proletarian"—since it was exercised by "the Party of the proletariat." To this corresponded their enthusiasm for the capitalist "rationalization" of production, Taylorism, piecework, etc. That this attitude corresponds in fact to one of the deepest layers of the thought of Marx himself, I have tried to show in the second of the articles mentioned above and in many other texts.

15. That this "rational" organization is, in fact, intrinsically and inherently *ir*rational, full of contradictions and incoherencies, I have tried to show in "On the Content of Socialism, II" (1957) [T/E: in *PSW 2*]; "On the Content of Socialism, III" (1958) [T/E: also in *PSW 2*]; and "Modern Capitalism and Revolution, II" (1961) [T/E: also in *PSW 2*]. There *can* be no "rational" basis for a hierarchical-bureaucratic organization under modern (as opposed, e.g., to "Chinese mandarin") conditions. "Knowledge," "skill," "expertise" *should* be the criteria for the selection and appointment of people—and *cannot* be. The "solutions" to the problems facing the organization (firm, administration, party, etc.) are determined by the shifting results of the struggle for power constantly going on among rival bureaucratic groups, or rather *cliques* and *clans*, which are not accidental or anecdotal phenomena, but central pieces in the workings of the bureaucratic mechanism. The idea of a "technostructure" is, as such, a mystification: it is what the bureaucracy would like people to believe. Those at the top are at the top not qua experts in a technical field, but qua experts in the art of climbing up the bureaucratic ladder. The bureaucratic apparatus is forced, as it expands, to reproduce within itself the division of labor it imposes more and more on the whole of society; thereby it becomes separated, estranged from itself *and* from the factual substance of the problems. Any "rational" synthesis becomes impossible. But some synthesis must take place. Decisions must in the end be made. And they are: in the Oval Office (or in the corresponding Kremlin Bulb), between nixons, ehrlichmans, haldemans, and other petty delinquents of subnormal intelligence. This *is* the apotheosis of "technostructure," "scientific management," etc.—just as the Lockheed bribes are the apotheosis of "perfectly perfect competition," "optimization through free-market mechanisms," etc., of the Professors of Economics.

16. Which today's "Marxists" are unable to see, as they go on talking about "commodity production" in the West and "socialism," however "degenerate," "deformed," etc., in the East.

17. The idea of a neutral technique, as well as the idea that capitalist "rationalization" is rationalization without the quotation marks, is central to Marx's thought, even if it remains more or less hidden there. Cf. the texts cited in notes 14 and 15 above.

18. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961, p. 133.

19. The same conclusions are arrived at when one considers the reality of production, that is, the be-

havior and the struggles of the workers, all over the industrial world, East or West. Everywhere the externally imposed, coercive "organization" and "discipline" of work is combated by the workers. This fight is not, and cannot be, only "negative," only a fight "against exploitation"; it is, of necessity, at the same time a fight for another organization of production. The workers fight against exploitation *in* production, i.e., *as* workers, as they work and in order to be able to perform their work (otherwise, they lose their job or money). To do this, they have to work, half the time, *against the rules*—"working to rule" is the best method of immediately bringing about chaos in production (another lovely indication of the "rationality" of capitalist organization). Thus already at present informal groups of workers have to define and apply not a single but a two-sided "work discipline": a discipline aimed simultaneously at "beating the boss" *and* at performing "a fair day's work."

20. I have discussed some of these problems—the most "immediate," in my view—in "On the Content of Socialism, II," cited in note 15 above.

21. T/E: I have slightly altered Castoriadis's version of this quotation to make it conform to the Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling translation of *Capital,* vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 763, the edition we have used in this translation series.

17
The Diversionists

I did not await the appearance of the most recent specimens to speak about Parisian fads, the glutting of the market by plastic "pop" philosophy collages, or the provincialism of the former capital of universal culture.[1]

The succession of fads, however, is not a fad: it is *the* fad by which the age, particularly in France, lives its relation to "ideas." The successive collages form an overall collage, the *function* of which is becoming more and more discernible. One certainly cannot reduce the signification of a thought or of a body of ideas to a social and historical function; this reduction, like that performed by "archaeology," is one of the procedures by which the contemporary ideology tries to avoid the question of the true and the false. As it turns out, however, we are not dealing here with thought, not even with ideas, but successive waves of the ruling system's *complementary ideology*. While the *main ideology* continues to try somehow or other—and the poor thing is quite moth-eaten—to persuade people that the problem of society is not on the agenda, or that it is in the process of being resolved by the present majority, or that it will be so tomorrow by the opposition, a more subtle function is fulfilled by more subtle ideologues for a public that itself is also more subtle. This public, of course, makes up only an infinitesimal fraction of the "real country." Its potential qualitative importance, however, is considerable. In positive terms, what it thinks today will be thought tomorrow or later by a much greater number of people (via national education, the media, etc.). In negative terms, if it began to think

Originally published as "Les Divertisseurs" in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, June 20, 1977. Reprinted in *SF*, pp. 223–32. [T/E: A previous translation by Dorothy Gehrke, which has been consulted on occasion, appeared in *Telos*, 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 103–6. This issue of *Telos* also presented translations of the contributions to this controversy written by Régis Debray, André Glucksmann, André Gorz, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Edgar Morin, and Jacques Rancière.]

improperly (that is, if it began to have relevant ideas on relevant issues), it might end up becoming a dangerous ferment.

To understand the function and the modus operandi of the complementary ideology, one need only compare the actual problems posed for the past thirty years, the ones that have corresponded to new and profound traits in the social and cultural French and world situation, with the axes of the succeeding fashionable discourses, the questions these discourses raise and those they eliminate, the answers they provide. The clear and immediate conclusion is that these discourses have functioned to ensure that these actual problems *will not be talked about*, or so that they will be removed, concealed, or drawn away from the public's attention. American military experts call a "decoy" a missile that contains no nuclear warhead but acts as a bait drawing the enemy's antimissile fire to increase the chances that the other missiles will get through. The traditional military term "diversion," however, works just as well. Let us see how.

In the first phase of the postwar era, the real problems had a name: Stalinism in general and in France; the nature of the Soviet regime and of the "socialisms" popping up like mushrooms in Eastern Europe and in China; the Cold War. The stage was filled by Sartre. What did he say? Starting in 1952, he provided Stalinism, up to and including the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution, with a (non-Marxist) justification. Then, when the inadequacy and insufficiency of Marxism became flagrant and began to be questioned, Sartre "discovered" Marxism and, with the help of an introductory economics textbook, tried to fabricate a new version. Not much later, and scarcely "Marxist," Sartre became "Third-Worldist," thereby dodging the domestic social and political problems of the former colonies (as well as, moreover, of the industrialized countries) and concealing the tragedy of these countries, which had attained independence only to fall under the domination of an often ridiculous but always cruel bureaucracy. Let us do him a favor and not mention his Maoist period. Are these judgments too severe? The person in question recently wrote that *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was right at the time but wrong to say it (therefore, Sartre rightly was wrong). The walls are not crumbling and paper bears anything written upon it.

After 1958, the country entered definitively the era of modern capitalism. Economic expansion; accelerated bureaucratization of all spheres of social life; planned manipulation of people as workers, consumers, citizens, spouses, students, etc.; apathy and privatization settled in. On the theoretical plane was required a new analysis of a system whose central problem visibly is not that of "economic contradictions" but the antinomy between the transformation of people into passive executants carrying out the orders of directors and the impossibility the system would face on the functional level if ever this transformation actually were to be imposed. On the practical-political plane: the extension of the revolutionary problematic to all domains of life, and in the first place to daily life, with the accent placed on the autonomous activity and struggle of human beings as *subjects* against an alienating system. On the level of ideas: the demolition of the mystificatory representation the system gives of itself as "scientific," "rational," etc.—*therefore*, the denunciation of the *ideology* of "science" and of "knowledge," which has itself become that system's ultimate justification.

It is precisely at this point that structuralism became the dominant fashion. An era of inanities on the death of man, of the subject, of history, etc.; of empty discourses on "scientificity" and "the economy" (without Marxo-Althusserian "science" ever producing a single statement *saying something* about the actual economy); of the denunciation of the idea of alienation (that is to say, of *heteronomy*) as "Hegelian"; of the continued cover-up of the bureaucracy and of Stalinism by silence pure and simple, or by imputing concentration camps to Stalin's "humanism"—whereby Althusser has attained the distinction of acting more dishonorably than [Louis] Aragon, which is no small feat. Paper bears anything; so does a certain public. While people were becoming more and more oppressed in the name of "science," some tried to persuade them that they are nothing and that "science" (the "unparalleled revolutionary science" of Althusser's convulsions) is everything. While a new contestation was developing, while people were searching for, and beginning to create, new attitudes, norms, values, the accent was placed on "structures" so as to evacuate living history.

Instead, living history—wildcat strikes in industrialized countries, Berkeley, massive "informal" movements in the United States (blacks, youths, women, the struggle against the Vietnam War), student movements in Europe, and finally, May '68—came to evacuate structuralism. You can search with a magnifying glass for *one single sentence* in Sartre, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Barthes, etc., that is even remotely relevant either for the preparation of May '68 or for its subsequent comprehension. You will not find it. Do our intellectuals speak in order to say nothing? Not at all. They speak so that people *will miss the point*.

May '68 and its aftermath pose considerable problems. The most important (in my view, obviously) is this: How would this tremendous explosion be able to go beyond the stage of mere explosion without losing its creativity, how would this fantastic deployment of autonomous activity be able to institute lasting collective organizations that express it without drying it up or confiscating it, how would the contents that it was creating in abundance be able to find new forms—above all, *political* ones—that would permit them to rise to the level of full social-historical effectiveness?

Today this problem has been totally evacuated. The diversionists have arrived. Some toy with "desire," the "libido," etc.; denounce responsibility as a "cop's word"; set traps for others and trap themselves in the blind alley of schizophrenization. Their strict complement, Foucault ("This century will be Deleuzian or will not be," he says; we can rest assured that it is not) presents *all* society as caught up entirely in the nets of power, thereby erasing the struggles and the internal contestation that put power in check half the time. (According to the latest news reports, he too has discovered the "plebs"—who, however, are "reduced to nothing" as soon as they "become fixed in a strategy of resistance." Resist if it amuses you—but without strategy, for then you are no longer the plebs but power.) Others, finally, are developing anew or continuing a tremendous work of mystification, making of Maoist totalitarianism the last hope of humankind. This sinister farce has lasted at least eight years and still is not over: "The Maoist adventure . . . I still consider it today one of the very great pages of recent French history," says Bernard-Henri Lévy. Wretched country: the great pages of your history are written when people confuse concentration

camps with liberty. During eight years, several of the guiding lights of the mind who are now discovering totalitarianism were teaching the population that to think is to think Mao Tse-tung.

Today, the situation in France is codetermined by the March 1978 election date. Once does not make a habit: it happens that, as a function of a series of well-known factors, these elections surpass in their potential *effects* the habitual electoral ritual. These effects are not where the parties' headquarters pretend to see them. The elections *can* trigger actions and reactions among the population, which may enter into *political* activity–and this in an extremely complex and difficult situation. A host of problems are to be raised and discussed from this perspective.[2]

The new wave of diversionists (who have baptized themselves, by double antiphrasis, "new philosophers") is in its turn carrying out its historical function by displacing questions–or by covering over in advance the true questions by "answers" *which have for their effect and their function to stop dead in its tracks the movement of reflection* and to take the edge off the political and revolutionary critique of totalitarianism on the one hand, of Marxism on the other. It does not pose the question, *Which* politics? It affirms that *politics* is Evil. It does not pose the question of language; it says (stupidly, in language): all language and all discourse are the Master's. It does not ask: What knowledge, whose, for whom, in order to do *what?* It says: knowledge is power. It condemns the idea of an absolute knowledge–then reaffirms it twice over. For it claims to possess one piece of absolute knowledge: the perenniality of alienation, of oppression, of the State. (Whence and how does it know this? It does not *know* this; it has *decided* this.) And, in a thousand and one ways, it also imputes this to the "Master": "Who says total power . . . says total knowledge" (Bernard-Henri Lévy). It does not ask itself if total power and total knowledge can ever be anything other than a phantasm. It thus accredits anew the (purely Foucaultian) myth of an omniscient and omnipotent power.

Now, *this myth is obviously what power would like the enslaved to believe.* (Foucault places omniscience and omnipotence not in individuals but in this mysterious entity called "power"–or "powers," or "networks of power." Therefore, for Foucault, in history there is an impersonal instance of absolute rationality. Hegel transcended? Give us a break!) The new wave adopts a sovereign point of view from which it conducts an overflight of millennia of history in order to yield this finding: history has never been anything but the power of power, the mastery of the master; its state is the State. Concealed here are the active conflict tearing through "historical" societies in the narrow sense since they first came into existence, their contestation from within, the putting into question of the instituted imaginary; societies without any State; the birth of the State *within* history. Unthinkable is the difference between Asiatic monarchy, Athens and Rome, the Holy Roman Empire, parliamentary republics, modern totalitarianism. What is it, then, that gives Bernard-Henri Lévy, for example, the opportunity to speak and to publish? How is it that he is able to go out and "market" philosophy, instead of being the eighth perfumer in a sultan's harem–which, perhaps, would be more in line with the "order of things"?

The new wave of diversionists does not ask: How is totalitarianism *actually* engendered? Shamelessly pillaging through what a few of us have been working out for the past thirty years, it hastily lifts from this work a few elements whose meaning

it distorts in order to say: Totalitarianism *is* Marx, *is* Hegel, *is* Fichte, *is* Plato. It understands neither what thinking means nor the *unfathomable* relationship historical thought and historical reality entertain. Diverting the critique of Marx that we had made from a political, praxical, revolutionary perspective—a critique that was bringing out precisely the capitalist, Western, metaphysical heritage of which Marx had remained prisoner, to discover *thereby* what in Marx remained *on the hither side* of a revolutionary aim[3]—it tries to draw from this critique the following absurd conclusion: it is *precisely as* a revolutionary that Marx would have engendered the Gulag. But where then did we draw the revolutionary (or, for that matter, any) critique of Marx? What permitted us to say that all that—the "system," "rationalism," "the economy," the "laws of history"—represents, in Marx, the persistence of the capitalist universe? Was it because we adopted on the topic of Western history the point of view of God or of the Yanomami—or was it because this history engenders incessant contestation from within, which, far from being mere "resistance," has produced an aim and a project for the radical transformation of the institution of society, *and continues to produce these?*

The workers' movement began well *before* Marx, and it had nothing to do with Fichte or with Hegel. It is Glucksmann who desperately remains a little master thinker when he reduces the revolutionary project—an *actual* movement that has lasted for two centuries—to a few writings signed and dated by philosophers. And the movement *continues*: when the new diversionists were for the most part swearing by Althusser or by Mao, the blacks, the women, the young were already in movement. When the question posed is not how to "replace Marxism" but how to create a new relationship between thinking and doing, how to elucidate things in terms of a practical project without falling back either into the system or into doing just anything, they took refuge in a petty dogmatic speculation, a series of assertions pure and simple, which is only the pauper's version of the system. As there is the plumber's trade, so there is that of the intellectuals: the latter massacre authors (in Glucksmann, there are blunders of the first order about Marx, Freud, and Cantor) and speak without rhyme or reason (when Lévy states that "the totalitarian State is not the police but the learned in power," he behaves like a *political mystifier*; but, obviously, if the Brezhnevs are "learned," the Lévys can be "philosophers"). And from where are they speaking? Glucksmann is not a former *zek*, and I doubt that the *zeks* have anything against Fichte. Certainly; but one has to enlighten them. *Enlighten* them? You mean *master* them? As for Lévy, the answer is clear: he speaks from everywhere and from nowhere. As an individual, he does not exist, *he says*, he is simply fashioned through and through by the Master—whose language (which does not permit him, *he says*, to say anything that is not the Master's), moreover, he uses. And yet, from another quarter, he has knowledge of Good and Evil. Literally. The Serpent to this Eve has yet to be revealed. ([Maurice] Clavel, perhaps?)

Compilation, misappropriation, and distortion of others' ideas, cited voluminously when they are fashionable,[4] kept quiet (or cited "on the side," a tactic whose use is spreading) when they are not—as history accelerates, the new wave of diversionists is reaching new heights of irresponsibility, imposture, and advertising gimmickry. In other respects, it performs its function well. These clown acts will not upset the official "Left": such things can only comfort them and reassure them. The

Communist party or CERES[5] will easily find a young teaching assistant somewhere to point out without any effort at all the inconsistencies and the impoverishment of Lévy, Glucksmann, Lardreau, Jambet, etc., *and thereby continue their pigeonholing all the more easily.* Operation "new philosophy" fully plays into the interests of the apparatuses: take a good look at the quality of those who criticize you. The diversion—the decoy—will have functioned as it should.

Reply to André Gorz

Who was wrong and *who* was right, in the sense of proper names? An uninteresting question. *What* was right and *what* was not? What in the presuppositions and methods of both parties made it possible to see what was right, and what prevented one from seeing it? We cannot turn away from these questions without renouncing thinking and learning.

History need not be rewritten. Especially when this history continues. For, it was in *1973* that Jean-Paul Sartre was making statements in the magazine *Actuel* that amount to justifying *in advance* any future Moscow trials (statements I have quoted and commented upon in a note added to "Sartre, Stalinism, and the Workers" [*PSW* 1, pp. 240–41]): "[R]evolution implies violence and the existence of a more radical party that imposes its will to the detriment of other, more conciliatory groups. . . . It is inevitable that the revolutionary party might just as well happen to strike out at some of its own members." Who then is deaf, Gorz? And who is justifying in advance the guillotines?[6]

I had taken care to indicate that I was speaking of the post-1952 Sartre. Just as easily, however, could I have spoken of the pre-1952 Sartre. Do reread *What Is Literature?*,[7] with your eyes of today, and you will see that the postulates are the same: the USSR is a "socialist country," its "safekeeping" is off limits to discussion, the revolution there is just "out of order," "encirclement" explains everything, the French Communist party is criticized because the "means" it utilizes are contrary to "the end pursued . . . the abolition of a regime of oppression."[8] "We know that in Russia [the worker] engages in discussion with the writer himself and that a new relationship between the public and the writer has appeared there."[9] Sartre knew that in 1947! And he is a writer!

Sartre's non-Marxist justification of Stalinism becomes most savory when he proclaims, a few years later and without warning, that Marxism is the "unsurpassable philosophy of our time." He thus inaugurated what has become to an increasing extent the style of the era: Today I say white, tomorrow black, and, if you take it

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In the *Nouvel Observateur* issue dated June 27, 1977, André Gorz came to the defense of Sartre in a text entitled "Sartre et les sourds" [T/E: "Sartre and the Deaf," trans. Dorothy Gehrke, in *Telos*, 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 106–8] (the deaf people in question being represented by me). I responded to him in the next issue of this weekly magazine (July 4, 1977) with the text entitled "Réponse à André Gorz." Reprinted in *SF*, pp. 232–35. [T/E: I have on occasion consulted Gehrke's *Telos* translation of Castoriadis's "Reply to Gorz," which appeared in ibid., pp. 108–9.]

down or dare to ask me why and how, you are a censor, a terrorist, nostalgic for the guillotine.

It is worth rereading the "Reply to Pierre Naville" (March 1956) so that one can meditate on the revolutionary radicality and audacious realism of these sentences: "How is it that [Naville] does not see that the USSR evolves with and through the totality of the state apparatus? How is it that the wise progression of declarations made and of measures taken does not show him that what is involved is a complex operation led by those who have taken over *as soon as* Stalin died? . . . [T]his plan of action is being very skillfully carried out *step by step* and each step is prepared so as to announce in itself the next one. . . . The leaders are bringing along the masses, revealing to them a new future, full of hope."[10] The "political" Sartre is there in his entirety: cracker-barrel discussions [*le "Café du Commerce"*] on the planet Mars. But what is this *mentality* that fixes upon *leaders* [*dirigeants*] only? And what does the relative *echo* it receives signify?

One has reason to believe that this skillful step-by-step preparation nevertheless included a few faltering steps, since a few weeks later there was Poznan, then the Polish October and the Hungarian Revolution. Sartre then wrote "The Spectre of Stalin." Those who want to remain at the level of the superficial and the manifest are free to content themselves with the "condemnation" of the Soviet intervention.[11] Claude Lefort, however, had meticulously shown at the time[12] that in this tortuous text lay hidden a subtle justification centered around the idea of a "slippage to the right" of the [Hungarian] Revolution *after* October 23 [1956]—or precisely when workers' councils were beginning to be formed. "You claim to have saved socialism: yes, on November 4. Or, at least, that can be discussed." And this gem—100 percent condensed Sartre: "Suddenly, after having aimed at liberty in the bosom of the regime, the masses demanded the liberty of setting up for themselves a regime that pleased them. [Paragraph indentation, then:] Therefore, it is correct that the insurrection turned to the Right."[13] I completely agree with you, Gorz: "There are various ways of being 'Stalinist' and various ways of declaring oneself, in the face of opposition, to be the depository of a 'revealed truth.' "[14] For example: daring to say that, if the masses demand the liberty of setting up for themselves a regime that pleases them, that is the sign of a "turn to the Right."

What was specific to [Frantz] Fanon, and what Sartre emphasized in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, was obviously not the anti-imperialist struggle but Third World messianism and the virtual obliteration of political and social problems, over there as well as here. Is it not time to ask oneself what is going on in China and in Algeria, in Guinea and in Cuba, in Vietnam and in Cambodia? And where are they now, those who have been convinced that the struggle against their own imperialism required the abandonment of all critical attitudes concerning what was happening in the former colonies?

It is conceivable, as Gorz writes, that my inability to "recognize in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* the foundations of a theory of alienation" stems from "deafness" or "monopolistic desire."[15] Nevertheless, to be quite scientific about the matter, another hypothesis cannot be ruled out: that this book contains neither the foundation of such a theory nor of anything else whatsoever.[16]

Notes

1. For example, in the preface to the 10/18 Edition of *La Société bureaucratique* [T/E: recently reprinted in a one-volume edition (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990); in English, see *PSW 1*, pp. xxiv-xxv] and the "General Introduction" to the 10/18 series [T/E: also reprinted in the Bourgois edition; in English, see *PSW 1*, pp. 3–36].

2. I plan to speak about them in the next issue of *Libre* [T/E: see "La Gauche et la France en 1978," *SF*, pp. 237–58, including the publication note on p. 237, which explains why this article was withdrawn before its publication in *Libre*; available in English as "The French Left," *Telos*, 34 (Winter 1977–78), pp. 49–73].

3. See "Proletariat and Organization" (1959), in *PSW 2*, and "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory" (1964–65), now the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975), trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Oxford: Polity Press, 1987).

4. T/E: The word "fashionable" appears in English in the original French text.

5. T/E: CERES was the Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et d'Education Socialistes, a "left-wing" research group and political club led by Jean-Pierre Chevènement; it was subsequently integrated into the French Socialist party.

6. T/E: Gorz had said, "[T]he sound of the guillotine that punctuates your assertions and your arrogant desire to be the only one who is right are intolerable" ("Sartre and the Deaf," *Telos*, 33 [Fall 1977], p. 108).

7. T/E: Gorz had protested, "Well, Castoriadis, do reread *What Is Literature?* (1947). . . . It was [Sartre's] journal alone, *Les Temps Modernes*, that, in its first hundred issues, raised all the 'real problems' " (ibid., p. 107).

8. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), p. 282.

9. Ibid., p. 247. [T/E: I cannot resist quoting the end of this sentence, where Sartre assures us that this "new relationship" is "neither a passive and female waiting nor the specialized criticism of the intellectual."]

10. "Réponse à Pierre Naville," *Les Temps Modernes*, 123 (March 1956), pp. 1523–24.

11. T/E: Gorz had stated in his reply: "The fact is that after siding with the anti-American camp in 1953, Sartre condemned Soviet intervention in Hungary in a lengthy article in *Les Temps Modernes* ("The Spectre of Stalin"), which marked his break with the French and Soviet Communist parties" ("Sartre and the Deaf," p. 107).

12. Claude Lefort, "La Méthode des intellectuels dits progressistes," *S. ou B.*, 23 (January 1958), pp. 126–53; reprinted in *Eléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* (Geneva: Droz, 1971), pp. 260–84; 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 236–68.

13. "Le Fantôme de Staline," *Les Temps Modernes*, 129–131 (January 1957), p. 617 [T/E: *The Spectre of Stalin*, trans. Irene Clephane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), p. 37].

14. T/E: Gorz, "Sartre and the Deaf," p. 108.

15. T/E: Ibid.

16. T/E: In his introduction to "La Nouvelle Philosophie" in the *Telos* issue that also included the translations of the Gorz/Castoriadis confrontation, Michel Rybalka explains that "Sartre and Michel Foucault have not intervened so far, but can be considered as sympathizers [of the "New Philosophers"]. Sartre has recently proclaimed his break with Marxism and has consistently advocated a philosophy of freedom, despite some mistakes and errors. One will find, among the texts translated below, two opposite views concerning him. It is regrettable that Castoriadis's basic dislike of Sartre leads him into a polemic which is too contrived to serve anyone" (p. 94). And in his reply, Gorz himself challenges Castoriadis on this score: "You must not have been among the students who in May '68 carried Sartre triumphantly on their shoulders into the great, overflowing amphitheater of the Sorbonne" (p. 107). To back up these views of Sartre as heroic martyr marred only by a few (unspecified) "mistakes and errors" and as idol of the French student rebels, *Le Nouvel Observateur* printed a picture of a weary-looking Sartre, entitled "Sartre at the Sorbonne, in May '68," with a caption lifted from an earlier part of Gorz's article, "Covered with mud by both [the Russian and American] camps."

In addition to the present text, Castoriadis's views on Sartre can be read in "Sartre, Stalinism, and the Workers," in *PSW 1*, including note (d), added in 1973, which he mentions above, and in "The Hun-

garian Source," chapter 16 in this volume. One could also note, as I have done, that "Sartre played a part in May '68, but he had already spoiled having much intellectual influence over that movement as he had altered his basic categories of human motivation from *desire* in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) to *scarcity* and *necessity* in his *Critique*, and this at the beginning of a decade of affluence with potentially radical implications for modern Western societies" ("Fellow Travelling in Nicaragua" [review of Joel Kovel's *In Nicaragua*], *Thesis Eleven*, 27 [1990], p. 223).

Let me simply add here this rare piece of self-insight from Sartre himself, looking back in retrospect on the gaze of the May 1968 student youth: "I was in agreement with the student movement. . . . But at bottom I did not understand it. . . . It was in Italy, a few days before the Soviets entered Czechoslovakia, that the students of Bologna asked me what May '68 signified, and I began to reflect and to find some explanations. It took me the entire year of 1969 to understand something" (*On a raison de se révolter* [Paris: Gallimard, 1973], p. 63; quoted from "Malaise de la Civilisation: Sartre," in *L'Anti-Mythes*, 15 [January 1976], p. 11). What did he understand? "In May '68, I was for the students; but my first impression, later forgotten, rediscovered in '69, was that their movement was directed against me" (p. 82; quoted in *L'Anti-Mythes*, ibid.). Even this frank admission, however, allows Sartre to claim too much of a role for himself: on the "intellectual" level, the main result of May '68 was the definitive destruction of structuralism and its scientistic pretensions, not a protest by these anti-Communist left-wing students against Sartre's continued Russian fellow-traveling (which itself ended only in *August* 1968, with the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia [cf. *L'Anti-Mythes*, ibid., pp. 9–10]).

18
The Evolution of the French Communist Party

[AUTHOR'S NOTE:[1] The following article, reprinted here with permission, was first published in the French journal *Esprit* in December 1977. In no sense is it topical. Its purpose is to explain how a totalitarian political apparatus like the French Communist party [PCF] has been able to survive and perpetuate itself for more than thirty years in a rich and "democratic" country, and during a time when French social life has become rapidly modernized.

The article also offers an interpretation of the changes in the PCF's strategy and tactics since 1972. It seems to me that recent events confirm the interpretation. The strategic impasse that has always confronted the PCF remains unchanged. It is this impasse that drives the Party to its tactical "shifts." To try to explain each shift "rationally" would be a mistake, for essentially these shifts show that the Party's choice

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Originally published as "L'Evolution du P.C.F.," in *Esprit*, December 1977, pp. 41–61. Reprinted in *SF*, pp. 259–92. [T/E: A previous, abridged translation by Adrienne Foulke, "The French Communist Party: A Critical Anatomy," which has been consulted on occasion, appeared in *Dissent*, Summer 1979, pp. 315–25. As the publication note for the *previous* article in *SF*, "La Gauche et la France en 1978" (p. 237) explains: "Written in July 1977 for the second issue of *Libre*, this article was to appear in November of that year. After the breakup of the 'Union of the Left' on September 23, the members of *Libre*'s editorial committee present in Paris decided to withdraw this text, as well as a text by Claude Lefort on the same subject, thinking that that event had appreciably reduced readers' interest. I highly regretted this decision, which was made in my absence. In the meantime, the text had been translated into English and published under a slightly abridged form in the American review *Telos*, 34 (Winter 1977–78), pp. 49–73. The following pages [237–58 in *SF*] reproduce the initial version of this text, omitting the part devoted to the PCF, which was published, under a reworked and expanded form, as 'L'Evolution du P.C.F.' " The *Telos* translation of "La Gauche et la France," entitled "The French Left," is not included in the present collection.]

lies between poor alternatives. After the Union of the Left[2] broke up in September 1977, the PCF waged an increasingly violent campaign against the French Socialist party; this campaign was suspended between March 13 and 15, 1978 (that is to say, between the two rounds of elections), only to be resumed even more violently thereafter. One may anticipate that it will continue for a long time – at least until the next presidential election campaign in 1981. Now once again, the PCF has chosen to isolate itself.

So far, the Party has paid a very modest price for all its inconsistencies and volte-faces. The "dissidence" of a few Party intellectuals has been effectively neutralized by the Leadership, and there has been no split in the Organization, not even an attempt to create a "fraction" or a "tendency." No doubt, many old-timers register their dissatisfaction by "voting with their feet" – they drop out with no fuss. No doubt, too, in union elections the PCF-controlled union, the CGT,[3] is losing around 5 percent of the vote. Were national elections to be held at this moment, the PCF's percentage of the total vote would shrink by perhaps two or three points. However, such fluctuations are on a scale that the PCF has experienced several times before. Everything points to the fact that it will maintain itself not so much by its "adaptations" (which are essentially verbal) to changes in French society and in the general political and ideological atmosphere *but rather because of the rigidity of its bureaucratic apparatus*, which refuses to yield one iota of control over the Organization. The lesson here, though not new, continues to be of fundamental importance. – C.C.]

Has the French Communist party truly changed? If so, to what extent and in what direction? The line adopted for the Union of the Left, the changes in the Party's language and in its public stances, the distance it has taken with regard to Russia all seem to be indicative of an evolution. The breakup of the Union of the Left, the organization's continued political monolithism, seem to belie this idea. The question remains open. Its importance outstrips the specific case of the PCF.

In order to discuss this question, we must go beyond the level of words. That is a truism. Considering, however, the content of the commentaries and "analyses" now circulating, this truism must be forcefully recalled to mind. When the PCF "abandoned" the dictatorship of the proletariat, some voiced their approval of this "democratic" step, others criticized or condemned it because this would mean the abandonment of Marxism. But obviously, the PCF has *never* been a partisan of the dictatorship *of the proletariat*; it has always been partisan of the dictatorship *of the PCF*. To proclaim that one is abandoning what one never really pursued is merely to perpetuate the mystification. Undoubtedly, the change in form of this mystification has its importance; the PCF wants to signal that it has renounced its goal of attaining power on its own. This fact itself cannot be totally devoid of significance. In order to see whether this change signifies anything other than the Stalinists' endless proclamations about their love of democracy and of the people (it was under the 1936 Constitution, "the most democratic in the world," that Stalin sent tens of millions of people to concentration camps), an exercise in propaganda, a tactical maneuver, or something else, we must turn toward an analysis of the *reality* of the PCF, for the resolutions adopted in its congresses entertain no relationship with this

reality. ("Proletarian internationalism," pseudonym for Russian hegemony, has always been, and remains, a similar snare.) In the fifty-odd volumes of Lenin's *Complete Works*, one phrase, at least, will forever remain true: "In politics, only imbeciles take others at their word."

Likewise, the political "line" proclaimed by the PCF does not faithfully express its true political aim. Moreover, this political aim is not necessarily "conscious," and still less is it "rational." What the PCF—usage of this prosopopoeia is inevitable—*says* it intends, what it *believes* it intends, what it *actually* intends, what it *truly would do* and *really would be led to do* were it to come to power are situated on different, though certainly related, levels. Examination of these different levels must proceed from an analysis of the *reality* of the PCF.

The Totalitarian Apparatus

The *reality* of the PCF is, first and foremost, its *organization* and, within this organization, the bureaucracy or, more exactly, the *bureaucratic Apparatus*. This Apparatus is not identical to the set of concrete individuals who populate it, embody it, and make it function. It has its own level of existence, as a set of relations and "rules" ensuring its reproduction qua bureaucratic Apparatus (namely, the perpetuation of these relations and "rules," and the continuous renewal of the cohort of individuals who embody it and make it function). In relation to this set of relations and "rules," the individuals are contingent and substitutable, though obviously the Apparatus can exist, survive, and preserve itself only by ensuring the uninterrupted recruitment of individuals capable of making it function in conformity to its "nature," which individuals thereby reproduce and perpetuate in their behavior, the observance of these relations and "rules." Let us recall that, as in every modern bureaucratic organization, here too we witness the fundamental structural phenomenon of the difference, of the scission, between *formal* and *real* processes. The relations and "rules" governing the PCF's existence do not derive from its bylaws. These bylaws entertain a complex relationship with these relations and "rules," though this relationship is rarely expressed and usually camouflaged.

The Apparatus of the PCF and of other Communist parties (CPs) is not merely a bureaucratic Apparatus like that of the State, of the army, of the church, or of a modern business firm. It is a *totalitarian political* bureaucratic Apparatus, that is, it is determined by the goal of totalitarian domination over society by means of state power. Totalitarian domination is *unlimited* domination on the part of the Apparatus. In coming to power, the Apparatus is not limited by right or by law: the law is what the Apparatus decides and what it makes of it. ("The cadres decide everything," Stalin used to say.) Nor is the power of the Apparatus limited by any specificity, proper characteristics, or already existing organization of existing social material; society is for it nothing but indefinitely malleable raw material for it to model. In particular, it is not limited by a boundary between a "public sphere" and a "private sphere" of individual existence, any more than by the recognition of sectors of activity that in principle would lie beyond its power. This goal of homogenizing, of pulverizing society and the people in order to agglomerate them to the State (which is itself subject to the Apparatus) is presented, in the ideology of the Appara-

tus, as its opposite, that is, as Identity of the People and of "its" State, mediated by the (totalitarian) Party. Lastly, the power of the Apparatus cannot be limited by any "ideas" that might be opposed to its domination or that would simply lead to discussion of it. The Apparatus has to make its ideology a state ideology and any other one a crime against the State.

This is the *ideal tendency*, the *limit* of what the Apparatus tends to achieve. In truth, however, this limit never could be reached: strictly total power is, strictly speaking, a pure representation and nothing more. Even apart from this, a host of key factors go to ensure that, in its actual reality, totalitarian domination on the part of the Apparatus *necessarily* deviates from its ideal limit, and that the observed variants deviate therefrom to different degrees. During the past twenty years, only one country, Maoist China, has lived in the immediate vicinity of this limit. (We might add that numerous "left-wing" French intellectuals were deliriously enthusiastic about Maoist totalitarianism at its moment of culmination: the "Cultural Revolution." Furthermore, they have not evolved much since then. Having acclaimed the Revolution in totalitarianism, today they denounce Totalitarianism in revolution. The sentiments have changed, the thinking remains strictly the same.) In particular, the statist ideology need not be "total." Its essential domain, where it can tolerate absolutely no dissent [*un discours contraire*], is that of politics, of the goals and of the organization of society. Its "natural" tendency is to invade, starting from there, all other domains; the examples of Italian fascism or of certain Eastern European countries today show, however, that this tendency may very well not come to full fruition, provided that its fundamental postulate—namely, that the Apparatus possesses the "truth" about society and politics—remains unchallenged. We thus see, indeed, that totalitarianism does not necessarily imply that Knowledge as such is to be identified with Power, still less that power invokes "rational" Knowledge. Hitler did not claim that he himself, or the Nazi party, knew everything: he claimed that he knew what was needed for the German people. Neither did he claim that he knew this through rational reflection; he knew it *because he had a mission*, and he denounced Reason in the name of blood, soil, etc. (It hardly requires mention that one would have to be stupid beyond belief to confuse Power's *invocation* of knowledge with knowledge itself.)

The aim of totalitarian domination over society is not "external" to the Apparatus: it is not an "end" whose "means" would be the Apparatus, any more than the Apparatus could be a "means" that might be put in the service of other "ends." This aim is not only what holds the Apparatus together and keeps it in motion; it is conveyed through its very mode of being, inscribed in its daily life and functioning; it is constantly nourished by the external and internal activities of the organization, at the same time that it nourishes them. Even before coming to power, a totalitarian party—Communist, Nazi, or other—prefigures already in its own reality a totalitarian society, it *already is* a totalitarian microsociety so far as it can be within the context of an overall society that has not yet become so. It already institutes within itself the type of social relations and the significations it tends to impose, when it seizes state power, on the whole of society.

This prefiguration of the totalitarian domination of the Apparatus over society is achieved, within the organization itself, as unlimited power of the *Summit* of the

Apparatus over the organization. The Summit exercises such power both when the totalitarian organization has seized power and forms therefore a subsociety within society, as well as when, outside existing power, it constitutes a microsociety opposed to established society. In the latter case, the aim of totalitarian domination over society is already achieved, in an embryonic way, in and through the unlimited power of the Summit of the Apparatus over the organization; and inversely, this embryonic realization of unlimited power already within the organization itself is the germ and almost the guarantee for the universal deployment of the organization's totalitarian goal when it does seize power.

The unlimited power of the Summit of the Apparatus over the organization signifies in concrete terms, here again, that this power is in its essence not subject to "rules"; in other words, that the "rules," which still exist on paper, are simply formal, or again, that the Summit can always impose its decisions by means of these "rules" or in defiance of them when need be. In particular, the Summit is not subject to any "rules" when it comes to designating its members: the Summit is *irremovable by "regular" means*, and it *perpetuates itself by cooptation*. (In a bureaucratic apparatus of another type, for example, the Socialist party, the Western-style State, or the bureaucracy of a business firm, the rules limiting the power of the Summit as well as those regulating how its members will be designated do not remain *simply* formal. There is a sociological "chance," in the sense Max Weber gave to this word, that is to say, the effective possibility, that these rules can be made to prevail *against* the existing authority.)

It does not follow that the Summit is absolute master, even when it is taken independently of the limits external and internal "reality" imposes on it. The Summit exists as the "personified" part of the Apparatus and exists for the Apparatus; the power of the Summit is a moment of the power of the Apparatus. Of course, this relationship is not and cannot be instrumental. The *reality* of the totalitarian organization is the Apparatus, but the Apparatus can "realize" itself only by means of individuals, and in particular those who make up the Summit. The Summit is not "means" or "instrument" of the Apparatus, it is a part of and the culmination of the Apparatus's *incarnation*. Like all incarnations, this one, too, has its tragic aspects. Between the "personified" Summit and the Apparatus as such, tensions are always possible and can become quite significant. Nevertheless, through these tensions and conflicts between the Summit and the Apparatus it is still the unity of the two that manifests itself and prevails. Whereas, for example during the "Cultural Revolution," Mao tried, with the support of a fraction of the Chinese CP and of the army, to line up the population against the Party's ruling fraction and did in fact at times attack the Apparatus as such, the result and the goal of the operation was to renew and reinforce the Apparatus's domination over Chinese society while modifying the relationship between this Apparatus and its personified Summit, Mao himself. And whereas Stalin, during the most demented period of his rule, sent hundreds of thousands of "devoted Party cadres" to their death, he had to, at the same time and by these very acts, reaffirm and reinforce the power of the Party as such, proclaim that "the cadres decide everything," and invest each petty local Communist despot with the same kind of power over the base as the kind he himself wielded. Stalin was able to destroy physically three-quarters of the contingent individuals populating the Ap-

paratus, but only so long as, simultaneously, he preserved and reinforced the Apparatus as such. Furthermore, this destruction of individuals is what confirms, seals, and brings to full expression, really and symbolically, the omnipotence of the Apparatus, as it shows that the Apparatus is quite distinct and independent of any particular person; that it is not subject to any rules, not even to those of language and logic; and that, ultimately, even the irreversibility of time cannot resist it, since it can rewrite history every year.

It is also clear that the unlimited power of the Summit does not necessarily take the form of the "personal power" of a single individual. Of course, the connection between the high points of modern totalitarianism, during its birth and its consolidation, and the power of a single individual (Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, etc.) is far from accidental. A host of contemporary examples show, however, that this connection is not absolutely necessary, either. In any case, the question of whether modern totalitarianism is indissociably tied to the power of a single individual has been settled in the negative by history. Stalin and Mao are dead; the Apparatus remains.

Finally, not only does the relationship between the Summit and the Apparatus not exclude antinomies between the policy conducted by the Summit and the clear-cut interests of the Apparatus, but, in fact, such antinomies are inevitable and give material expression to one of the essential irrationalities incorporated within totalitarian bureaucracy. Like Mao's "Great Leaps Forward," Stalin's policies brought the Russian State and Party one hundred times within an inch of collapse and ruin (and they were rescued only by Hitler's similar follies). For such policy moves, the rationalistic observer will always seek "rational explanations," but these will end up being nothing but rationalized reconstructions. The Apparatus can exist only as seat of an absolute power—and this power is necessarily invested in someone or some group of persons. From that point on, it must submit to the consequences. Every separate power—that is, state power—is stupid, and absolute power is absolutely stupid. This obvious statement will bother only those who have a functionalist view of society and of history. No more than any other, a totalitarian society does not need to be absolutely functional. In fact, it *cannot* be so. If it is unable to retain a minimum of functional operations, it will collapse; that is all. (And how would one define this minimum, once the case of Russia from 1934 to 1941 has been examined?) An immense distance separates this minimum of functional operation from "total rationality" (from the standpoint of the Apparatus's own self-preservation).

In all these respects, the PCF remains a totalitarian organization. Its *reality* is still, without any doubt, that of an organization dominated by an Apparatus and subject to the ultimate power of the Summit of the Apparatus. The PCF can declare that it advocates democracy, total anarchism, or Zen Buddhism; its totalitarian aim is inscribed in the structure of its organization and in the constantly reproduced relations of domination on the part of the Summit. This structure and these relations of domination cannot but bear a totalitarian aim. In this regard, not only does what the PCF *say* matter little, but its "self-representation" behind closed doors carries just as little weight. (The Bolshevik party was not lying, not even to itself, when it said that its goal was to instaurate socialism.)

The Summit of the PCF retains unlimited power over the organization, and it

imposes its "line" at will. A comical illustration of this point is the last-minute "abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat," which occurred upon orders of the Party leadership and after a long "democratic preparation" at the last Congress during which the issue was not even raised. The Politburo suddenly had a vision, and a few hours later, by a miracle of democratic unanimity, the Congress to a man shared it. The ups and downs of the last few months—during which the Summit decided and carried out all by itself the break with the Socialist party [PS]—offers another example.

The method of designating leaders remains the same: de facto cooptation by the Summit, or nomination of a few new members of the ruling team by those already in place. The entire *effective* organization of the PCF continues to be arranged in such a way that the members of the organization are trained to obey the Summit, which thus ensures its hold on power. That the brutal methods of yesteryear have been softened changes nothing of consequence. Since the leadership has all it needs at its disposal (money, press, internal publications, cadres, specialists, information, etc.) and since it still strictly forbids all "tendencies," the alleged free discussion within the PCF of recent times can only be understood as a safety valve for letting off a little inside pressure. The day "tendencies" would be allowed and the leadership in place could be defeated by a vote not rigged in advance, the PCF would begin its transformation into a merely bureaucratic party, like the Socialists. It is very far from that.

Organization as Ideology

Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the PCF has been undergoing a visible "evolution" for some years—if only at the level of its public speeches—and that one should inquire as to the import, causes, and dynamic of this "evolution," all the more so as it is not an isolated phenomenon (cf. "Euro-Communism").

Let us note right away that the surprising thing is not a possible "evolution" of the PCF, but the absence of such an evolution for so long. The surprising thing is that the PCF has been able to remain the fossil it has been for so many years. Like everything else, the Apparatus really has to strain to persevere in its being, for it is immersed in a society—contemporary French society—that, itself, is changing rapidly. How and by what means has the Apparatus been able to maintain, preserve, and reproduce itself?

The question of how a totalitarian Apparatus is able to preserve itself and reproduce itself presents several intimately connected features. The Apparatus must be able to ensure adequate recruitment; to reproduce its internal totalitarian structure; to preserve, as a *realizable* goal, its aim of acceding to power; to maintain an ideological cement.

It is a truism to say that these questions arise in an entirely different manner when the totalitarian Apparatus has seized state power. For the Russian or Chinese bureaucracy, the question of its self-preservation or reproduction coincides with the question of the self-preservation and reproduction of Russian or Chinese society as societies of exploitation and totalitarian oppression. State power assures continued recruitment, which is nothing but the self-preservation and numerical expansion of

the privileged and dominant stratum. This same state power also guarantees—in multiple ways and, as a last resort, by violence—the totalitarian structure of society and of the Party. The only limits on this power are the population's struggle against bureaucratic exploitation and oppression and the antinomies and irrationalities inherent in the totalitarian bureaucratic organization itself.

The situation is different in the case of ideology. If, while the bureaucracy is coming to and then consolidating power, a "granite ideology" (to use Solzhenitsyn's phrase) is indispensable, the bureaucracy's relation to its ideology becomes much more elastic once its power becomes firmly based. Of all the totalitarian tools at the Russian bureaucracy's disposal, its ideology is the most timeworn; and at the same time, it has become a burdensome yoke for the bureaucracy itself. The decomposition process of the bureaucratic ideology, officially begun at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has ended up turning this ideology into an empty shell. At the limit, the Russian bureaucracy could rid itself almost completely of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology and settle for a progressivist rationalism with a vague "Marxist" coloration. (This is in fact what is in the process of occurring. This is also what, after a dozen years of playing football with "Marxism-Leninism," is beginning to come about in China.) With the power it has at present, it can go very far along this path; and this power itself, the glory and might of the Russian (or Chinese) Empire, is in the process of becoming the main ingredient of its "ideology." Certainly, the long-term effects of the disintegration of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology are another matter. Russian society is, perhaps, the first known example of a *cynical society*. The question of how long a regime can survive on pure and simple cynicism is posed in a far more urgent manner for totalitarian bureaucratic societies than for Western societies.

Things are different for a totalitarian Apparatus in "opposition," such as the PCF. The cement that the real and imaginary interests of individuals represent for a bureaucracy in power (and even for "reformist" bureaucracies not kept out of power) cannot in this case bind the organization's members, not even a majority of its cadres. What does perform this function is the combination of an ideology with a seeming realistic goal of attaining power. Into this combination, individuals project themselves and their interests (though the second factor is not generally decisive here). "We have true and just ideas; and as a function of these ideas, we will have power."

In the case of Communist parties, and of the PCF in particular, this ideology was not only and not so much "Marxism" in its successive versions ([Roger] Garaudy, [Jean] Kanapa, etc.). Its hard core was the reference to two mythical "realities": to "another place" and to "another time." "Another place" was Russia, where "Socialism" had been achieved; "another time" was both time past and time to come: the imaginary "revolutionary past" of the PCF and the notion that the present-day reactionary policy of the PCF could be passed off as a mere tactic redeemed by the idea that "one day" the PCF would finally reveal its revolutionary essence (a redemption made all the easier as "revolution" had come to signify more and more merely "seizure of power"). Thus, the PCF was living in large part off an anachronism and, if the neologism is permitted, off an anatopism. Whatever it did, it remained for its militants and sympathizers vaguely "revolutionary," first, because it had been so and

because it would be so again when circumstances permitted; second, because Russia was building socialism. The first of these rationalizations, a pure act of faith, was constantly contradicted by the most immediate, the most direct experience. (But how many true Christians ever lost their faith in an infinitely good God by looking at the miseries of the world?) The intrinsic fragility of this first "reason" was compensated, however, by the obsessive reference to an *actual* mythical "reality" (which is nonetheless unverifiable because it is located "elsewhere"), the "fact" that "socialism" was being constructed in Russia (then in the "people's democracies," etc.). Similarly, French Maoists in the period from 1968 to 1975 had to believe that somewhere, over there, fortunately very far away, the "revolution" had been achieved; this is what permitted them to go into delirium about reality in France.

This reference is in the process of fading away at an accelerated speed. After having resisted for an incredibly long time the harshest blows reality could deliver, the mystification of "socialism" is beginning to wear off. We are witnessing the sudden addition of the cumulative effects of Tito's break; the Twentieth Congress; the events of 1956 in Poland and in Hungary; the break with China; the removal of Khrushchev; the invasion of Czechoslovakia; the massive purchases of American grain and the installation in Russia (with American capital) of Pepsi-Cola factories to quench the thirst of "the new man"; the dissemination of the truth about the Gulag, "psychiatric" repression, Eastern-bloc dissidents, and so forth. Already before the events in Czechoslovakia I wrote that the reference to Russia had become a heavy mortgage for the PCF.[4] It has not ceased becoming increasingly heavy since then.

Hence, the PCF—like the other "Euro-Communist" parties—can no longer make reference to a "finished model" of alleged socialism at which it, too, would be aiming. Moreover, it is now obliged to declare that no "model of socialism" exists. In vain, however, did it at the same time speechify on "the French road to socialism," for it can offer its militants and sympathizers neither a definition nor a representation of what it claims to be doing. The "elimination of the power of monopolies," "nationalization," and "planning," even when baptized "democratic," appear quite puny when compared with the plump old myth of two hundred million Russians who, guided by their brilliant leader Stalin, sang as they built socialism and brought into being a new type of man.

Furthermore, the question of whether such measures bear any relationship to socialism and of what impact they would have on people's actual lives is now being broadly debated and can no longer be conjured away. The PCF has become incapable of saying in what the "socialist" character of its accession to power would consist—apart from the fact that it would be *its* accession to power. Under these conditions, the organization's ideology is tending to become the organization itself as ideology. Everyone on the "Left" wants nationalizations, but the PCF wants "more" of them, "better" ones, "true" ones carried out "differently." It is better *because* it is the PCF. Ultimately, its ideology is reduced to the invocation of its name: "We are Communists because we call ourselves Communists." Apart from that, the eclectic pauper's soup that is the militant's daily fare has been enriched with all the by-products of contemporary civilization, and the cultural page of *Humanité*[5] has become as sophisticated and almost as tolerant as the book section of *Le Monde*.

The Preservation of the PCF

Before examining the fate of the PCF's attempt to make the seizure of power a *realizable* goal, let us consider the questions posed by the PCF's astonishing preservation over the past thirty years. Its influence has remained relatively stable (one-fifth of the electorate at large and almost half of the vote within the trade unions). Moreover, it has recruited adequately to maintain this influence nearly everywhere, it has continuously renewed the supply of leaders and cadres, and it has maintained the key features of its totalitarian structure. This preservation has not depended on the PCF alone; French society had to produce constantly, over a thirty-year period and in nonnegligible numbers, the type of individual that would be ready to become electoral voter, militant, and cadre of the PCF and of the CGT, and this society continues to do so today.

This is an immense problem, coextensive with the history of the country during the postwar period (which itself is obviously incomprehensible unless one goes back even further). We can only provide a few remarks here. Briefly, the preservation of the PCF has been conditioned by the persistence of "archaic" traits within French capitalism during a very long period (and still today). France and Italy are the only industrialized countries in which a large Communist party exists. This persistence has given the *inertia* of its political and trade-union institution full play.

To speak of inertia in this connection is in no way a tautology. Just like a body in physics, an institution tends to conserve the speed and direction of its movement so long as no other force comes to alter this inertial movement. In the case of an institution, to exist means to incorporate also the devices and mechanisms that normally ensure (save for "accidents" or action by some external factor) its preservation and reproduction.

Thus, at a given moment—for example, in 1945—*it happened that*, as a function of all previous history, the CGT, which was dominated by the PCF and which was its culture medium for growth, was *the* mass trade union; it faced virtually no competition but from "reformist" unions without reforms to propose and from scabs. Until 1958, and even as late as 1962, French capitalism was helplessly mired in the chaos and anarchy resulting from the conflict between its accelerated modernization and the survival of its superannuated organizational forms. In the majority in most companies, the CGT succeeded in playing the twin roles of "defender of labor's demands" and comanager of certain aspects of company life while profiting from both. (Recourse to the CGT business agent has been and often remains an effective means for workers to resolve an "individual" problem.) From a revolutionary, or even "correct reformist" standpoint, the criticisms one could lodge against it matter little within this context.

An incalculable number of times, not to say constantly, the CGT has prevented struggles from occurring, subordinated them to the PCF's political line (during the "Cold" War, the Algerian War, in 1968), concluded shameful compromises (the most monstrous being, certainly, the Grenelle Accords in 1968). The fact is that all this has provoked nothing more than splits by individuals or minuscule minorities, or else mere disillusionment on the part of laboring people or a change in the type of support they give the CGT ("lesser evil"). Most striking of all is that this situation

was altered only slightly by the appearance of the CFDT,[6] which nevertheless offered an alternative. Here again, inertia: the CGT *already is* the trade union, it *is there*—therefore, it remains *the* trade union. (The same thing holds, in another context, for the TUC in England and the AFL-CIO in the United States.) And the "working-class base" it offers the PCF is the most solid feature in the latter's inheritance.

A similar situation prevails on the political level. Until 1958, French capitalism remained entangled in the problems of its modernization. From 1958 to 1968, this modernization occurred under the aegis of the "personal power" of de Gaulle. Throughout this period, French social democracy steadily became more and more rotten. Despite the fact that the PCF had a hard time passing from the most sectarian to the most compromising of policies—the "Cold War" followed by the vote of special powers for [Guy] Mollet to wage the Algerian War (by way of parenthesis, who knows, and who *says* today, that the PCF never actually opposed this war?)—it remains the sole pole of opposition in a country where, for a century, half the population votes "on the Left." It takes advantage of several elements of the post-1789 French tradition (Jacobinism, struggles against the clergy, "revolutionary" patriotism: the English and American ruling classes never emigrated to Coblenz, never were restored by a foreign invasion, never crushed a Commune with the help of Prussia or collaborated with Hitler), as well as of its participation in the management of established society (there are at present twenty-eight thousand elected Communist officials in France, mostly municipal councillors).

Nevertheless, the evolution and modernization of French society, a process that has accelerated considerably since 1960, makes it more and more difficult for the PCF to preserve itself along the lines of the old model. Economic expansion and changes in life-styles are altering the population's problems and preoccupations. The PCF's emphasis on poverty in its propaganda now receives only a weak echo. At the same time and for the same reasons, the human reservoir from which it draws its militants and cadres is changing. Society is producing in gradually decreasing quantities the type of individual that is ready to become a "militant," then a "political cadre." At issue here is the erosion of the classical model of "political militantism" (the only remaining example thereof being the Communist party) and "politics" itself as a central and ongoing activity; but also and especially, the younger generation is increasingly rejecting authoritarian relationships, which, however, are the condition for the existence of the totalitarian Apparatus.

These two phenomena (which express momentous changes in the depths of modern society) came explosively to the fore in May 1968. Despite appearances, the consequences of May '68 have weighed very heavily on the evolution of the PCF. The image is certainly not simple; in fact it is highly contrasted. And it is especially this contrast that reflects the present situation of the PCF. On the one hand, society continues to produce, for reasons impossible to analyze here, a number of individuals who are still adapted to the authoritarian model and who feel its attraction (an additional indication is the relative escalation of interest in Trotskyism and Maoism *after* May 1968). It is upon this in particular that the PCF leans as it tries to perpetuate itself as an organization. Yet such is not the case for the great majority of young people today. To this extent, the PCF has to "adapt" somehow or other; change totally

its rhetoric and, as much as possible, its "working style," replace the simple *Diktat* of yesteryear with a more complex sort of manipulation, and attenuate or camouflage as far as possible the divergence between what it claims to be doing in relation to society as a whole and what it actually does within its own organization. The situation is highly contradictory, and it is in no way certain that the Apparatus is capable of mastering totally the consequences of the process thus unleashed.

The Goal of Power

Indeed, the Apparatus is able to hold together, maintain itself, and maintain its momentum only because of its goal of acceding to power and on the condition that this goal appear realizable. In other words, the social and historical situation has to offer a real "chance," a nonempty objective probability, that the Apparatus will be able to realize its goal. And a sufficient number of individuals must exist for whom this goal appears (and can be represented) as realizable (as "credible"). (I am still speaking of the *actual* goal of the Apparatus, the accession to totalitarian power, not its successive layers of packaging: people's democracy, union of the French people, nationalization plus democratic management, etc.)

From this standpoint, the existence of the PCF since its exit from the government in 1947 has been more than "objectively" difficult, and the maintenance of its influence raises only more forcefully still the question of how and why a totalitarian Apparatus has retained its solidity and exerted a force of attraction over a society that seems in no way destined for a totalitarian future. Despite the endemic crisis of French capitalism from 1947 to 1958 and even later, the PCF's accession to power was conceivable only with the explicit or virtual military support of Russia. It was therefore conceivable only within the context of a worldwide conflict, for then as now it would seem that the United States could not accept without a fight Europe's passage into the Russian camp, and France under the power of a pro-Russian CP would render continental Europe militarily untenable. Also, during the most acute period of the "Cold War" (1947–53), the PCF, which had practically been transformed into a Russian guerrilla detachment, gave itself over to suicide operations whose sole justification was the presumption that an international crisis was imminent. The "Cold War," however, was succeeded by the "Cold Peace," and then an alleged period of dêtente. The PCF was thus forced to beat a historical retreat. It encamped in society, periodically endeavoring to break its isolation; in fact, it made its central objective its own self-preservation as it waited for better times. Even self-preservation becomes increasingly difficult, however, in a changing society, especially when one has an ideology that is coming apart at the seams and a Russian "model" that serves, especially after 1968, as a foil.

The Apparatus is thus led to modify its "line"—a gradual and painful modification, begun in 1968, that undoubtedly still has some way to go. Analogous factors are producing an analogous result in other Communist parties, especially the Italian CP. What is called Euro-Communism is certainly a phenomenon that would require a detailed analysis, notably as concerns the possibility of a new schism within the Communist International, with which it is pregnant. Let us content ourselves with a summary of the evident facts: Euro-Communism expresses the effort of totalitarian

Communist Apparatuses to adapt to a situation in which their accession to power along the lines of classical scenarios appears unrealizable for an indefinite period of time, and in which, as a function of social changes, they no longer, under penalty of death, can limit themselves simply to efforts at self-preservation. These apparatuses thus are led, in particular, to take their distance to an increasing extent from Russia; to modify and to relax their behavior vis-à-vis the outside world, as well as, to a certain extent, their internal functioning; and, finally, to abandon, or to pretend to abandon – the difference here is likely to be slight – their ideological monolithism.

This effort at adaptation strains under a series of acute contradictions, as is clear in the case of the PCF as well as in that of the Communist party that has traveled farthest down this path, the Italian. But when have contradictions prevented any individual, organization, or even institution from existing? Let us, rather, consider concretely the difficulties of the existence of the PCF since the signature of the Common Program in June 1972 and from the perspective created by the 1978 elections.

These difficulties are expressed in the two great changes that have successively been made in the PCF's "line": the signature of the Common Program and the formation of the Union of the Left in 1972; the progressive hardening of the PCF's position vis-à-vis its "allies" beginning in 1977, followed by the rupture of the Union of the Left in September. It would be absurd to want to discuss this "line" and its modifications as if it were a matter of "rational strategies," themselves "rationally modified." As incredible as it may seem, this is nonetheless the point of view adopted by all commentators when speaking of the movements and countermovements of [Georges] Marchais[7] and of [François] Mitterrand, as if it were a matter of a Spassky-Fischer match. The reader certainly will not fail to experience the side effect of a certain amusement. The question, however, goes far beyond the IQ of the persons involved. No more than anyplace else does one do in politics just what one pleases, one does not check and one cannot inspect all the parameters relevant to the decisions and actions to be taken. Neither a game of chess, nor *Kriegspiel*, nor poker (no player has ever seen his fourth King transformed in his hand into a two of spades, still less into a hitherto unknown card), politics is subject to the essential indeterminacy of the actions and reactions in the surrounding area and of the very tools the actors believe they have at their disposal. Such indeterminacy cannot be eliminated by a calculation of probabilities, as games theory would have it.

The "rational" – better, the "rationalizable" – component of PCF policy starting in 1972 can be understood only as the by-no-means unprecedented tactic of acceding to power via an alliance with the Socialist party, which at the time was considered too weak to interfere with the PCF's hegemony. The PCF therefore emerged from its twenty-five-year isolation believing that it could count on obtaining two apparently (and really) irreconcilable objectives: to reestablish credibility for its aim of acceding to power, and to lend credibility to its "democratization" process so as to avoid a breakdown in international relations (and perhaps a civil war) at the moment the Left would be installed in power. If a Left government could be installed legally and peacefully, the Stalinists could hope to have enough time to increase their penetration of the state and managerial apparatuses, gradually swallow up the Socialists, and ultimately subdue them (with the help, also, of an eventual split in Socialist party ranks), along the lines of a scenario that certainly would have to be

dubbed into French and updated, but which has already been produced elsewhere more than once.

Whether calculated or not, the enormous ambiguities in the Common Program and, ultimately, its absolutely *unrealizable* character corresponded rather well to this tactic. Certainly, they have served the two (or three)[8] partners. Everyone wanted to go fishing in troubled waters, or, more exactly, to trouble still further these common fishing waters, each side hoping to be the one to make the big catch.

The ambiguities of the Common Program, which were evident from the start, burst into broad daylight during the discussions over how to "realize" this platform. These ambiguities ultimately served as the pretext for the breakup of the Union of the Left. They concerned not only the number of firms to be "nationalized," the fate of subsidiary companies, and so on. Much more important were those relating to who would hold actual power in these firms (an issue that the PCF could hope to turn to its advantage as a function of the power of the CGT) and, especially, those concerning effective power over the economy and the actual management thereof, ambiguities that could not be resolved except by the makeup and orientation of the governmental power.

Not surprisingly, these ambiguities at the most general level resulted from the unrealizable character of the Common Program.[9]

[. . .]

The application of [the Common Program's economic] provisions would immediately create a chaotic situation—added to which would be the effects of the Left's electoral victory on the popular strata and the panic reactions in capitalist circles. This situation would be aggravated even more by the application of the measures aimed at increasing, in various ways, the incomes of broad social categories, measures that a government of the Left would undoubtedly have been forced to apply very early on.

The evolution of the situation would therefore have been decisively determined by the relation of (parliamentary and extraparliamentary) forces within the Union of the Left. The PCF counted on profiting from the ambiguities in the Common Program and from the general disorder that would ensue following the elections, were it to retain political superiority; without such superiority, however, it strongly risked ending up the loser, trapped in a series of dilemmas. And it also had to count on there being no possibility of autonomous intervention on the part of the population at large.

A Shamefaced Totalitarianism

This "line" therefore included such a quantity of chance elements and carried with it so many contradictions that it is not absolutely certain that, even if it had been able to preserve its hegemony within the Left, the Summit of the PCF would have welcomed its own victory with unmitigated joy. (It seems that the commentators never have tried to put themselves in Marchais's shoes the evening of an electoral victory for the Left, with the PCF leading the ticket.) But in any case, changes in French public opinion made victory unattainable. Counting at the outset on being the principal beneficiary of the Union of the Left, the PCF has discovered itself to

be the loser. Instead of hegemony or at least electoral parity with the Socialist party (which would still leave the PCF with a substantial advantage on the extra-parliamentary level, given its organizational superiority and its grip over the unions), it found itself more and more outdistanced by the latter. There can be few doubts about the signification of this fact: the more the risk of domination of the Left by the PCF seemed to be receding, the more people felt disposed to vote for the Left. Thus, the PCF's decline in relative influence has become a self-catalytic phenomenon, one feeding upon itself.

The PCF has tried to respond to this situation by acting as if it was de-Stalinizing itself, by taking its distance from Russia and even a little bit, though very discreetly, from its own past. Nothing has worked: the more Stalinists "liberalize" themselves, the more their influence is eroded; the more they want to appear as "sincere," the less they are believed. This, at least, the great Stalin knew: the totalitarian lie must be total, under penalty of total ineffectiveness. His bungling heirs have paid for their neglect of this elementary truth with a series of troubles and crises. Yet one obviously cannot be a Stalin under any and all circumstances.

And so, during an entire period, the PCF has harped more and more on "liberalization," on "democratization," on their coolness toward and independence from Russia, hoping to regain thereby at least a part of the ground yielded to the PS. This hope having been disappointed, and with the hour of (electoral) truth approaching, the PCF (which has repeatedly demonstrated, in the course of its history, that it cares as much about its "programs" as it does about Lenin's first baby shoes) began to show off its increasing intransigence vis-à-vis the PS, to "harden" its positions, and to present itself as the inflexible defender of "the people's interests." Had the PS given in–this was undoubtedly judged by far the least likely possibility–the PCF would have acquired some additional ammunition in its fight to gain power, should the Union of the Left have won an electoral victory. Had the PS not yielded, the PCF would at least have the opportunity to choose the moment and the terrain on which to break relations, thus avoiding the anguish of the postelectoral period. From the outset, however, this breakup of the Union of the Left was sooner or later inevitable. It happens that it occurred September 23, 1977, rather than, say, June 23, 1978.

The attempt to adapt the PCF's "line" to present political conditions in France has therefore failed. The policy of the Union of the Left seemed to be its sole possibility, but this policy constituted no less of a trap that it had set for itself. The break with the PS, however, is also a trap. In fact, there is for the PCF no "good" solution, no "favorable" outlook; there are only less bad solutions, or less unfavorable outlooks. Nothing says that for the Summit of the PCF an electoral victory for the "Left" was truly desirable, and everything leads one to believe that the PCF never really desired it; nor does anything tell us that its self-representation is "rational."

Of course, an electoral defeat of the "Left" would also be its own; but it has seen others, and it can still hope to survive this one. Its position would be even more difficult, however, in the case of an electoral victory. As governmental partner, it would certainly receive the least useful as well as most unpopular posts. Its attempts to penetrate the state apparatus and the managerial apparatus of large business firms would be combatted at one level by the PS and at another by the CFDT. Whatever

advantages might accrue would be heavily offset by the disadvantages of having to support the "austerity" policy that a government of the Left would be forced to adopt almost immediately. What would remain for it to do would be to choose the least unfavorable moment and terrain on which to break away—in order to appear as the "defenders of the workers," but also as the party responsible for the failure of the "experiment of a government of the Left." An analogous situation would obtain if it remained outside the government, the problem being transposed to that of whether or not to support the government in parliamentary votes of confidence. Certainly, not all room for maneuver would be closed off for it; one can count on Marchais and Séguy[10] to be at the same time in the government, supporting strikes against it, and trying to stifle such strikes were they to get beyond their control. How many times they would be able to play this game—and how many feathers they would risk losing—is, however, another question.

The PCF has preferred a new "historical retreat" to the enormous uncertainties it would have to face and, especially, to the practically certain threat of an explosive social situation that would be created by a "left-wing" electoral victory and its consequences. Under the circumstances, this is perhaps, for it and from its own point of view, ultimately the least irrational decision.

In response to the question posed—to what extent has the PCF been able, under the dramatically changing circumstances of the past twenty-five years, to maintain itself and preserve itself, not as numerical force and electorate, but as totalitarian Apparatus?—the answer will therefore be a complex one, which the reader may view as noncommittal [*normand*] or dialectical, depending on whether he belongs to a French or Chinese cultural tradition. The PCF has maintained itself as is—at the same time that it has transformed itself. But into *what* has it transformed itself?

It is transforming itself into a new and unprecedented variant of the totalitarian organization. Contrary to the Trotskyists' second-time-around analysis, there is no sense in seeing in the evolution of the French (as well as the Italian) CP the return to a social-democratic type of organization; despite the vain "predictions" made by Trotsky starting in 1938, if not earlier, this is not what has ultimately occurred, and these totalitarian organizations cannot be labeled "bureaucratic workers' parties." The PCF is not simply a bureaucratic party like the PS, the British Labour party, or the German Social Democrats. It is not abandoning its essential totalitarian characteristics: the Apparatus still dominates the organization, the Summit still enjoys unlimited power within that organization. Of course, we ought not to say that it is physically impossible for the PCF to give up these traits one day; if ever it did (in order to transform itself into a merely bureaucratic party), we would have ample time to verify that this change has occurred.

This maintenance of the PCF's essential totalitarian characteristics goes hand in hand with changes in its relations with Russia, with international Communism, with ideology, as well as with changes in its public postures and, up to a point, in its internal operations. These changes appear intelligible to us inasmuch as, after the fact, they seem almost forced on the PCF by changes in French society, in the type of individuals this society produces, in the problems preoccupying the population, as well as by the decomposition of its ideology, the heavy mortgage of its allegiance to Russia, the impasse into which its old political line had led it. Such intel-

ligibility, however, is quite relative. No one can say for sure that, had the PCF remained 100 percent Stalinist and pro-Russian, its loss of relative influence would have been greater. On the other hand, once these changes have taken place and as they continue to occur, their effects are inscribed in reality and begin to become irreversible. And it is not certain that the Apparatus will be able to master these effects and control them totally.

A new definition is therefore required. The PCF is not a "social-democratic" party, but it is no longer the pure Stalinist-style totalitarian party it was not so long ago. As with the Italian and Spanish CPs, we are witnessing the emergence of a historical novelty: a totalitarian Apparatus that can no longer appeal explicitly to a totalitarian ideology and is led to water down gradually the totalitarian mode of operation of the organization it dominates even as it is forced to maintain its totalitarian goal of power, which is encoded in its very substance and in its genes, but which nevertheless appears for the indefinite future unrealizable in the society it inhabits. The Apparatus can no longer be totalitarian except *shamefacedly*. How much longer is such a type of organization historically viable? That is a question to which I have not the ambition to reply.

The Enigma of Willful Blindness

Nevertheless, we must reflect further on the "objective" aspect of the following questions: What are the chances for totalitarianism in a "developed" society today? Does such a society contain an "objective probability approaching zero" for a totalitarian mutation ("objective" signifying here, of course, sociological or, better, social-historical)? These questions are in no way academic, for it is precisely the astonishing survival of the PCF that prohibits us from brushing them aside.

Contemporary society secretes bureaucracy through its every pore. Neither prerogative of Eastern-bloc or underdeveloped countries, nor "product of Marxism," and still less the "French disease," as our Minister-Thinker's latest discovery would have it,[11] bureaucracy is, at a much more basic level than "the market," *the institution* par excellence of modern capitalism. Contemporary society *knows* no other way of responding to its problems; furthermore, these problems are posed and defined in such a way that the sole possible response is a bureaucratic one: "organization," "regulation," "competence," hierarchy, division of tasks, pseudorational mastery. And it can survive as bureaucratic-capitalist society only to the extent that it imposes this model everywhere—with the decisive further requirement that individuals accept it and interiorize it. Its supreme victory comes when this model is taken up by those who contest and combat the established order. This resumption of what one wants to contest—the theoretical premises for which were laid down by Marx himself, the "other Marx," Marx the rationalist—has been performed, though in different ways, both by the parties and trade unions of the Second International and by Lenin and Bolshevism.

Bureaucracy, however, does not signify totalitarianism. The bureaucracy of modern societies is typically a "soft" bureaucracy, not a totalitarian one. What the "logic" of the modern world bears within itself, the magma of social imaginary significations fashioning it and dominating it as well as their instituted and materialized in-

strumentation, is pseudorational bureaucracy, not totalitarianism. Here is another example of the limits of every "explanation" of history that would reduce what comes about [*advient*] to what has already been. In vain would one search for an "explanation" of totalitarianism in the conjunction of bureaucracy and revolution: neither Hitler nor Mussolini were revolutionaries. In vain, too, would one search for it in some particularly acute crisis of established society: these crises have usually found other outcomes, and Stalin imposed and consolidated the totalitarian power of the Russian CP independently of all crises. A monstrous historical *creation*, totalitarianism is rooted, in a hundred and one ways, in what precedes it; but also, in a thousand and one ways, it outstrips all "logic" and all "causality." It is the ultimate fulfillment of the process of bureaucratization—inasmuch as the bureaucratic Apparatus maximizes its power through this process, becomes completely autonomized thereby, and seizes hold of the substance of society. Yet it is also the total reversal of this process—inasmuch as this Apparatus becomes detached from all "rules" and inasmuch as the pseudorational imaginary of bureaucracy is thereby transformed into a dereistic delirium that also happens to exercise the cruelest grip over reality.

I noted earlier that nothing seemed to predestine French society for a totalitarian future, that the individuals produced by this society increasingly reject any and all models of authoritarianism. One might conclude that the chances for the Communist Apparatus to seize power in order to realize the totalitarian aim inscribed within it (whatever its "self-representation" might be) are practically nil. And yet, this conclusion cannot be taken as certain. In this domain, apparently incredible reversals cannot be ruled out. Generally speaking, the instauration of totalitarianism has corresponded to what we must label a sudden and brutal anthropological mutation, to a veritable landslide, accelerating with lightning speed and far surpassing all "explanation" and, a fortiori, all "expectations" [*prévision*]. An enormous question opens up: What then is this underlying fragility built into the psychopolitical personality of Western man—of this man formed since 1789, indeed since 1776 and well before, through the struggles against dogmas, arbitrary power, restrictions on freedom and on the expression of opinion, national oppression, and political, economic, and social injustice—that enables modern society to give rise from within itself in the space of ten to fifteen years—say, from 1918 to 1933—and far beyond the bounds of any "objective necessity" to tens of millions of individuals ready to cooperate enthusiastically in totalitarian undertakings; to swell the ranks of Fascist, Nazi, and Communist parties; to keep in operation immense apparatuses of lying propaganda; to participate in large numbers in the atrocious repression of opponents and even of simple citizens; and to guard gigantic concentration camps? Do such phenomena belong to a forever-bygone era?

But how could we forget certain aspects of the aftermath of May 1968, most clearly on the "organizational" level? Here was an immense movement that began and unfolded under the sign of struggle against authority, bureaucracy, hierarchy, pseudoknowledge, etc. And here we witnessed almost all those who, after the ebbing of the movement, wanted to continue to act, joining explicitly totalitarian movements (Stalinism, Maoism) or ones bearing a totalitarian dynamic (Trotskyism). These young revolutionaries *knew* nothing else, they *could think of* nothing else—in

spite of what they knew and thought during the days of May and June – than to bow to a "thought" fixed once and for all, incarnated in an organization they will obey, for years on end, like living corpses. And who can say what they would have been capable of doing, had their organization come to power?

It is therefore impossible to attempt to weigh the totalitarian fortunes of the PCF without retaining, in the clearest lit corner of one's mind, the following certainty: in this country with an ancient civilization and with a long tradition of criticism and democratic struggle, millions of people, without any police restraint, have swallowed whole for fifty years the monstrosities laid out daily in *Humanité*; not simply lies, but huge challenges to the merest hint of good sense. This full and free acceptance for half a century of delirious Stalinist scenarios by otherwise perfectly normal people; this *alienation*, which cannot be labeled as a case for psychiatry and yet which, like clinical cases thereof, cancels out both reality itself and the most elementary rules and even habits of reasoning, poses a problem of the first magnitude. This problem is as important as the Gulag and the power of Stalin or Hitler, if not more so. For one can understand – or think one understands – more easily the boundless consequences of *real* violence and *real* terror than the freely accepted and apparently "gratuitous" blindness of French and other Stalinists and Maoists.

July-October 1977

Notes

1. T/E: Castoriadis recounts the history of this author's note in a footnote (*SF*, p. 292): "Proposing to publish a translation of 'L'Evolution du P.C.F.,' the American review *Dissent* asked me to update this text. I sent them, in July 1978, the following note. I find nothing to change therein at the end of May 1979," the date *SF* was prepared for publication. We have reprinted Castoriadis's author's note verbatim from the Summer 1979 issue, except where requirements of standardization and where the French version's small departures from the printed *Dissent* note mandated slight revisions.

2. T/E: The Union of the Left was the electoral coalition of the French Socialist and Communist parties first formed in 1972. Electoral cooperation between these two parties continues to this day.

3. T/E: The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), created in 1895, has traditionally been the largest labor union federation in France.

4. In "The Anticipated Revolution" [T/E: chapter 11 in this volume, p. 142].

5. T/E: *Humanité* is the PCF's daily newspaper.

6. T/E: The Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail is the non-Communist national labor federation created in 1964.

7. T/E: Georges Marchais (b. 1920) became general secretary of the PCF in 1972.

8. T/E: The "third" party here refers to that part of the Radical party that was favorable to the Union of the Left, the Mouvement des radicaux de gauche (MRG; Movement of Left Radicals). Those opposed to the Union formed the Mouvement Réformateur (Reform Movement), led by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber.

9. T/E: Here Castoriadis has eliminated his discussion of the economic part of the Common Program. It appears in "The French Left" (see the publication note of the present article).

10. T/E: Georges Séguy (b. 1927) was general secretary of the CGT from 1967 until 1982.

11. T/E: Castoriadis is referring to Alain Peyrefitte, a French politician and governmental minister who wrote *Le Mal français* ("the French disease") in 1976. The phrase "Minister-Thinker" is a play on the phrase "Master-Thinker."

19
Social Transformation and Cultural Creation

I have weighed these times, and found them wanting.[1]

So far as I know, human genes have not suffered any deterioration—not yet, at least. We do know, however, that "cultures," societies, are mortal—a death that is not inevitably, not generally, instantaneous. Its relation to a new life, of which it may be the condition, is each time a singular enigma. The "decline of the West" is an old theme, and, in the deepest sense, false. This slogan tried to mask the potentialities for a new world the decomposition of the "West" was offering and liberating; in any case, it tried to cover over the question of this world, and to stifle political making/doing [*faire*] with a botanical metaphor. We are not seeking to establish that this flower, like the others, will wither, is withering, or has already withered. We are seeking to comprehend what, in this social-historical world, is dying, how, and, if possible, why. We are seeking, too, to find in it what, perhaps is in the process of being born.

Neither the first nor the second facet of this reflection is gratuitous, neutral, or disinterested. The question of "culture" is envisaged here as a dimension of the political problem, and one can just as well say that the political problem is a component of the question of culture in the broadest sense. (By politics, I obviously do not mean either Mr. Nixon's profession or municipal elections. The political problem is the

Originally published as "Transformation sociale et création culturelle," in *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 11:1 (April 1979), pp. 33–48. Reprinted in *CS*, pp. 413–39. [T/E: In translating this work, I have at times consulted Castoriadis's 1987 article "The Crisis of Culture and the State," which is a substantial revision and elaboration of themes developed in the present text. "The Crisis of Culture and the State," first published as the University of Minnesota's Center for Humanistic Studies' Occasional Paper Number 16, appears as a chapter of *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).]

problem of the overall institution of society.) The reflection is as anti-"scientific" as possible. The author has not mobilized an army of research assistants, not spent dozens of computer hours to establish scientifically what everyone already knows in advance: for example, that so-called serious music concerts are frequented only by certain socioprofessional categories of the population. The reflection is also full of traps and risks. We are plunged into this world—and we are trying to comprehend it and even to evaluate it. Obviously the person talking is the author. By virtue of what? By virtue of the fact that he is an involved party, an individual participating in this world; by the same virtue as that by which he is authorized to express his political opinions, to choose what he will combat and what he will support in the social life of the age.

What is in the process of dying today—in any case, what is being thoroughly put into question—is "Western" culture. Capitalist culture, the culture of capitalist society, which goes far beyond this social-historical regime, for it comprises everything that this regime has been willing and able to take from what preceded it, and quite particularly during the "Greco-Western" segment of universal history. All that is dying as set of norms and of values, as forms of socialization and of cultural life, as social-historical types of individuals, as signification of the collectivity's relationship to itself, to those who make it up, to the times, and to its own works.

What is in the process of being born, painfully, fragmentarily, and contradictorily, for two centuries and more, is the project of a new society, the project of social and individual autonomy. This project is a political creation in the deep sense, and its attempts at realization, diverted or aborted, have already made their mark on modern history. (Those who want to draw from these diversions and abortions the conclusion that the project of an autonomous society is unrealizable are being completely illogical. I am unaware that democracy was diverted from its goals under Asiatic despotism, or that workers' revolutions have degenerated among the Bororos.) Democratic revolutions, workers' struggles, movements of women, youth, "cultural," ethnic, and regional minorities all bear witness to the emergence and the continued vitality of this project of autonomy. The question of their future and of their "outcome"—the question of social transformation in a radical sense—evidently remains open. Also remaining open, however, or rather what also ought to be posed anew, is a question that certainly is in no way original, but is regularly covered over by the inherited modes of thought, even when they claim to be "revolutionary." This is the question of *cultural creation* in the strict sense, the apparent dissociation of the political project of autonomy from a cultural *content*, the consequences but also especially the cultural presuppositions for a radical transformation of society. It is this problematic that the following pages try, partially and fragmentarily, to elucidate.

I take here the term "culture" as intermediate between its current sense in French ("*oeuvres de l'esprit*" and the individual's access to these works of the spirit) and its meaning in American anthropology (which covers the entirety of the institution of society, everything that differentiates and opposes society, on the one hand, [man's] animal nature and nature [in general] on the other). I intend here by "culture" everything, in the institution of a society, that goes beyond its ensemblistic-identitary (functional-instrumental) dimension and that the individuals of this society posi-

tively cathect as "value" in the largest sense of the term: in short, the Greeks' *paideia*. As its name indicates, *paideia* also indissociably contains the instituted procedures by means of which the human being, in the course of its social fabrication as individual, is lead to recognize and to cathect positively the values of society. These values are not given by an external instance, nor are they discovered by society in natural deposits or in the heaven of Reason. They are, each time, created by the given society as kernels of its institution, ultimate and irreducible bearings for significance, orientation points for social making/doing and representing. It is therefore impossible to speak of social transformation without confronting the question of culture in this sense—and, in fact, one confronts it and "responds" to it no matter what one does. (Thus, in Russia, after October 1917, the relative aberrancy of *Proletkult* was crushed by the absolute aberrancy of assimilating capitalist culture—and this has been one of the components for the constitution of total and totalitarian bureaucratic capitalism upon the ruins of the revolution.)

We can explicate in a more specific way the intimate connection between cultural creation and the social and political problematic of our times. We can do so by asking certain questions, and by asking what these interrogations presuppose, imply, or entail—as statements of fact, even if subject to debate, or as articulations of meaning:

1. Does not the project of an autonomous society (as much as the simple idea of an autonomous individual) remain in a sense "formal" or "Kantian," inasmuch as it appears to affirm as value only autonomy itself? To be more precise: Can a society "will" to be autonomous *in order to* be autonomous? Or, to phrase the question another way: Self-government, yes; but *in order to do what?* The traditional response most often is: in order to better satisfy needs. The response to the response is: *What* needs? When there no longer is a danger of dying of hunger, what is it to *live?*

2. Could an autonomous society "better achieve" values—or "achieve other (i.e., better) values"? But which ones? And what are better values? How is one to evaluate values? This interrogation takes on its full meaning when one starts with this other "factual" question: In contemporary society, do values still exist? Can one still speak, as Max Weber did, of a conflict of values, of a "combat of the gods"—or is there not rather a gradual collapse of cultural creation, and something that, while it has become a commonplace, is not false, namely, a decomposition of values?

3. Certainly, it would be impossible to say that contemporary society is a "society without values" (or "without culture"). A society without values is simply inconceivable. Quite obviously, there are orientation points for the social making/doing of individuals and goals [*finalités*] to which the operation of instituted society is subject [*asservi*]. Therefore, there are values in the transhistorically neutral and abstract sense indicated above (in the sense that, in a tribe of headhunters, killing is a value, and without it the tribe would not be what it is). However, the "values" of instituted society today appear, and actually are, incompatible with or contrary to what the institution of an autonomous society would require. If the making/doing of individuals is oriented essentially toward the antagonistic maximization of consumption, of power, of status, and of prestige (the sole socially relevant objects of investment today); if the functioning of society is enslaved to the imaginary signification of unlimited expansion of "rational" mastery (technique, science, production, organization as ends in themselves); if this expansion is at once vain, empty, and in-

trinsically contradictory, as it manifestly is, and if human beings are compelled to serve this goal of expansion only by means of the application, cultivation, and socially effective utilization of essentially "egotistical" motives through a mode of socialization in which cooperation and community are considered and actually do exist only from the instrumental and utilitarian standpoint; in short, if the only reason we do not kill each other when that would be convenient for us is the fear of judicial punishment, then not only can there be no question of saying that a new society would "better achieve" already established, incontestable values accepted by all, but we really must come to see that its instauration would presuppose the radical *destruction* of contemporary "values" and a new cultural creation concomitant with an immense transformation of the psychical and mental structures of socialized individuals.

That the instauration of an autonomous society would require the destruction of the "values" presently orienting individual and social making/doing (consumption, power, status, prestige—unlimited expansion of "rational" mastery) does not even appear to me to require a particular discussion. What would have to be discussed, in this regard, is to what extent the destruction and the wearing down of these "values" has already advanced, and to what extent the new styles of behavior we are seeing—of course, in a fragmentary and transitory way—among individuals and groups (notably youth) are forerunners of new orientations and new modes of socialization. I will not broach here this capital and immensely difficult problem.

The term "destruction of values" may shock people, and appear inadmissible, were it a question of "culture" in the most specific and narrow sense: "works of the spirit" and their relation to actual social life. Obviously, I am not proposing that one bomb museums or burn down libraries. My thesis, rather, is that the destruction of culture, in this specific and narrow sense, is already largely underway in contemporary society; that the "works of the spirit" are already mostly transformed into ornaments or funerary monuments; that a radical social transformation of society alone will be able to make of the past something other than a cemetery, visited ritually, uselessly, and less and less frequently by a few maniacal and disconsolate parents.

The destruction of existing culture (including the past) is already underway to the exact extent that the cultural creation of instituted society is in the process of collapsing. Where there is no present, there is no more past. Journalists today invent a new genius and a new "revolution" in this or that domain every quarter year. These commercial efforts are effective for keeping the culture industry in operation, but they are incapable of masking the following flagrant fact: contemporary culture is, as a first approximation, nil. When an era has no great men, it invents them. What else is happening at present, in the various domains of the "spirit"? Aided by the ignorance of a supercivilized and neoilliterate public, people claim to be making revolutions when copying from and contriving bad pastiches of the last great creative moments of Western culture, be it what occurred more than half a century ago (between 1900 and 1925–1930). Schönberg, Webern, Berg had created atonal and serial music before 1914. How many of the admirers of abstract painting know the birth dates of Kandinsky (1866) and of Mondrian (1872)? Dada and Surrealism were

already around in 1920. Name a novelist one could add to this list: Proust, Kafka, Joyce . . . ? Paris today, whose provincialism is equaled only by its pretentious arrogance, furiously applauds some audacious directors who are audaciously copying the great innovators of 1920, such as Reinhardt, Meyerhold, Piscator. When one looks at the productions of contemporary architecture, one at least can feel some consolation: if these buildings do not themselves fall into ruin in thirty years, they will in any case be torn down as obsolete. And all commodities are now sold in the name of "modernity"—whereas true modernity is already three-quarters of a century old.

Of course, here and there some intense works still appear. I am speaking, however, of the overall assessment of a half century. Of course, too, there are jazz and cinema. There are—or there was? The grand creation, both popular and a high art [*savante*], that is jazz seems to have already come to the end of its life cycle toward the beginning of the 1960s. Cinema raises other questions, which I will not broach here.

Arbitrary and subjective judgments. Certainly. I am simply proposing to the reader the following mental experiment: let him imagine posing, eye to eye, to the most famous, to the most celebrated, of contemporary creators, the following question: Do you consider yourself, sincerely, to belong to the same horizon as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, or Wagner, as Jan van Eyck, Velásquez, Rembrandt, or Picasso, as Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, or Frank Lloyd Wright, as Shakespeare, Rimbaud, Kafka, or Rilke? And let him imagine his reaction if the person questioned answered yes.

Leaving aside antiquity, the Middle Ages, and non-European cultures, let us pose the question in another way. From 1400 to 1925, in a universe infinitely less populated and much less "civilized" and "literate" than our own (in fact, in hardly a dozen countries of Europe, whose total population, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was still on the order of one hundred million), one will find a creative genius of the first magnitude every few years. And here, for the past fifty years, a universe of three or four billion human beings, with unprecedented access to what, apparently, could have enriched and provided the tools for the natural aptitudes of individuals—magazines and newspapers, books, radio, television, etc.—has produced only an infinitesimal number of works that, one could think fifty years hence, will be referred to as major works.

This fact would certainly be unacceptable to the times. Not only does it invent fictive geniuses, but it has innovated in another domain: it has destroyed the critical function. What presents itself as criticism in the world today is commercial promotion—which is quite justified, given the nature of the productions to be sold. In the domain of industrial production proper, consumers have begun, finally, to react; here, product quality is, one way or another, objectifiable and measurable. But how could there be a Ralph Nader of literature, of painting, or of the products of the French Ideology? Moreover, promotional criticism, the only kind remaining, continues to perform a function of discrimination. It praises to the skies the silly things produced in this season's style; for the remainder, it does not disapprove of them, it merely keeps quiet, burying them under a deafening silence. As the critic has been raised in the creed of the "avant-garde"; as he believes he has learned that

the great works have, almost always, started out by being incomprehensible and unacceptable; as his principal professional qualification consists in the absence of personal judgment, he never dares to criticize. What presents itself to the critic falls immediately under one or another of two categories; either the incomprehensible is already accepted and adulated—in which case it will be praised—or else it is newly incomprehensible—in which case the critic will remain silent about it, for fear of somehow or other being mistaken about it. The critic's trade today is identical to that of the stock broker, defined so well by Keynes: guessing what those with average opinions think those with average opinions will think.

These questions arise not only with respect to "art"; they concern as well intellectual creation in the narrow sense. It is hardly possible here to do more than scratch the surface of the subject, posing a few question marks. Scientifico-technical development undeniably continues; perhaps it is even accelerating in a certain sense. Yet, does it really go beyond what can be called the application and elaboration of the ramifications of the great ideas that have already been established? There have been physicists who have judged that the great creative era of modern physics is behind us—between the years 1900 and 1930. Could it not be said that, in this domain, too, we find mutatis mutandis the same opposition as exists in the whole of contemporary civilization, that is to say, between the broader and broader deployment of *production* in the sense of repetition (taken strictly or broadly), of manufacture, of application, of elaboration, of the expanded deduction of *consequences*—and the involution of *creation*, the exhaustion of the emergence of grand new representational-imaginary schemata (such as were the germinal intuitions of Planck, Einstein, and Heisenberg) that had permitted the world to be grasped in other and different ways. And as for thinking proper, is it not legitimate to ask why, in any case after Heidegger but already with him, thinking more and more becomes *interpretation*, and why interpretation, moreover, seems to degenerate into commentary and commentary upon commentary? It is not just that one talks on and on of Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx; one talks less and less about them, one talks about what has been said about them, one compares "readings" and readings of readings.

What is dying today?

First, the humus of values from which the cultural work is able to spring and which it nourishes and deepens in return. The relationships here are more than multidimensional, they are indescribable. One feature, however, is clear. Can creation of works occur in a society that does not believe in anything, that does not truly and unconditionally value anything? All the great works we know have been created in a "positive" relation to "positive" values. This is not some moralizing or edifying function of the work—quite the contrary. "Socialist realism" claims to be edifying—which is why what it has produced is nil. I am not even speaking simply about Aristotelian *catharsis*. From the *Iliad* to *The Castle*, passing by way of *Macbeth*, [Mozart's] *Requiem* or *Tristan* [*und Isolde*], the work maintains with the values of society the following strange, more than paradoxical relationship: it affirms them at the same time that it revokes them, putting them into doubt and into question. The free choice of virtue and glory at the price of death leads Achilles to the discovery

that it is better to be the slave of a poor peasant on Earth than to reign over all the dead of Hades. Supposedly audacious and free action bring Macbeth to see that we are all but poor actors strutting about on stage. The full love, fully lived by Tristan and Isolde, can be achieved only in and through death. The shock the work provokes is an awakening. Its intensity and its grandeur are inseparable from this shaking up, this vacillation of established meaning. There can be such a shake-up, such a vacillation, if and only if this meaning is well established, if the values are strongly held and lived as such. The ultimate absurdity of our destiny and of our efforts, the blindness of our clairvoyance, did not crush but "uplifted" the public of *Oedipus Rex* or *Hamlet*—and those among us who, by singularity, affinity, or education, continue to belong to this public—insofar as it still lived in a world where life was at the same time (and I dare add: rightly) highly cathected and valued. This same sense of absurdity, the preferred theme of the best of contemporary literature and theater, no longer can have the same signification, nor can the revelation of absurdity have shock value, quite simply because it no longer truly is absurdity, there is no pole of nonabsurdity to which it might by opposition be revealed strongly as absurdity. It is black painted over black. From its coarsest to its finest forms, from *Death of a Salesman* to *Endgame*, contemporary literature does nothing but say, with a greater or lesser intensity, what we live daily.

Also dying—and this is another side of the same thing—is the essential relationship of the work and of its author to his public. The genius of Aeschylus and of Sophocles is inseparable from the genius of the Athenian demos, as the genius of Shakespeare is inseparable from the genius of the Elizabethan people. Genetic privileges? No; rather, a manner in which social-historical collectivities live, establish themselves, make and do things, and make themselves—and, more particularly, a manner of integrating the individual and the work into collective life. Nor does this essential relationship imply an idyllic situation, the absence of friction, the immediate recognition of the creative individual by the collectivity. The bourgeois of Leipzig hired Bach only in desperation after they were unable to obtain the services of Telemann. Nevertheless, they did hire Bach, and Telemann was a first-caliber musician. Let us also avoid another misunderstanding: I am not saying that previous societies were "culturally undifferentiated," that in all cases the "public" coincided with society as a whole. The tenants in Lancashire did not frequent the Globe Theatre, and Bach did not play for the serfs of Pomerania. What matters for me is the cobelonging of the author and of a public that forms a "concrete" collectivity, this relationship that, while social, is not highly "anonymous," is not mere juxtaposition. Here is not the place to make even a rough sketch of the evolution of this relationship in "historical" societies. It suffices to note that with the triumph of the capitalist bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century a new situation arose. At the same time that the "cultural undifferentiatedness" of society is formally proclaimed (and soon carried forth by specifically designed institutions, in particular by general education), a complete separation, a scission, is established between a "cultivated public," to which a "learned" art, an *art savant*, is addressed, and a "people" who, in the cities, are reduced to being fed a few crumbs fallen from the cultural table of the bourgeoisie, and whose traditional forms of expression and creation everywhere, in the city as well as in the countryside, rapidly disintegrate and are destroyed. In this con-

text, once again for some time there persists—even if a misunderstanding begins to slip in—between the creative individual and a determinate social/cultural setting a community of guidelines [*points de repères*], of references, of the horizon of meaning. This public nourishes the creator—not only in the material sense—and also is nourished by him. Scission, however, soon turns to pulverization. Why? An enormous question, to which one cannot respond by Marxist tautologies (the bourgeoisie becomes reactionary after attaining power, etc.), and which I can only leave open. One can simply note that, coming after six centuries of "bourgeois" cultural creation of an unprecedented richness (strange man, Marx! In his hatred of the bourgeoisie, *and* his enslavement to its ultimate values, he praises the bourgeoisie for having developed the forces of production, not stopping an instant to see that *all* Western culture, since the twelfth century, is to be attributed to it), this pulverization coincides with the moment at which the values of the bourgeoisie, progressively emptied from within, are finally stripped naked to reveal their vapidity. From the last third of the nineteenth century onward, the dilemma is clear. If he continues to share these values, the artist, no matter how "sincere," shares as well this vapidity; if vapidity is impossible for him, he cannot help but defy these values and oppose them. Paul Bourget or Rimbaud, Georges Ohnet or Lautréamont, Edouard Détaille or Edouard Manet. What I claim is that this type of opposition was not to be found in previous history. Bach is not the Schönberg to a Saint-Saëns of his time.

Thus appears the *artiste maudit*, the misunderstood genius condemned by necessity and not by accident to work for a potentially universal but effectively nonexistent and essentially posthumous public. And soon, the phenomenon expands (relatively speaking) and becomes generalized: the entity called avant-garde art is constituted—and it calls forth the existence of a new "public." Authentically so, for the work of the avant-garde artist finds an echo among a number of individuals; inauthentically so, for it will not take long to notice that the monstrosities of yesterday become the masterpieces of today. A strange public, originating in a social apostasy—the individuals making it up come almost exclusively from the bourgeoisie and from nearby strata—and able to live its relationship to the art it supports only through duplicity, if not bad faith. This public tags behind the artist, instead of accompanying him; it each time has to be violated by the work instead of recognizing itself therein; as numerous as it may be, it always remains pulverized, molecular; and, ultimately, the sole point of reference it shares with the artist is negative: the only value is the "new," sought after for its own sake; a work of art has to be more "advanced" than previous ones.

But "advanced" in relation to what? Is Beethoven more "advanced" than Bach? Was Velásquez retrograde in relation to Giotto? Transgressions of certain academic pseudorules (the rules, for example, of classical harmony, which the great composers, beginning with Bach himself, have often "violated"; or those of "naturalistic" representation in painting, which in the end no great painter ever respected) are valued for their own sake—in complete misunderstanding of the deep-seated relationships that always tie together, in a great work, the form of expression and what is expressed, to the extent that such a distinction can even be made. Was Cézanne a retard, who painted apples more and more cubically, because he wanted to make them look more and more like the originals and more and more round? Is it *because*

they are atonal that certain atonal works are truly musical? I know of only one work in the entire universe of literary prose that is an absolute creation, the demiurge of *another* world; this work, which in appearance takes all its materials from the world around us and, imposing an imperceptible and ever elusive alteration in their ordering and in their "logic," makes a universe from them that resembles no other and thanks to which we discover, in amazement and in fright, that we have, perhaps, always inhabited it in secret, is *The Castle*, a novel in classical, in fact banal form. Most men of letters today, however, go into contortions to invent new forms when they have nothing to say, neither new nor old; when their public applauds them, we must understand that it is applauding the exploits of contortionists.

This "avant-garde public," thus constituted, acts on artists through aftershock (and in synergy with the spirit of the times). The public and the artists are bound together by their joint reference to a pseudomodernism, a mere negation capable only of nourishing the obsession with innovation at any price and for its own sake. There is no reference against which to judge and to appreciate the new. How then could there be anything truly new if there is no true tradition, no living tradition? And how could art have as sole reference art itself, without immediately becoming mere ornament, or a game in the most banal sense of the term? As creation of meaning, of a nondiscursive meaning, not only is art by its essence and not by accident inexpressible in everyday language, but it brings into existence a mode of being inaccessible and inconceivable for that language; and with it, we are confronted with an ~~extreme paradox. Totally autarchic, sufficient unto itself, serving no purpose, it also~~ exists only as referral to the world and to worlds, as revelation of this world as a perpetual and inexhaustible to-be [à-être] through the emergence of what, until then, was neither possible nor impossible: of the other. Not: presentation in representation of the discursively unrepresentable Ideas of Reason, as Kant would have it; but rather creation of a meaning that is neither Idea nor Reason, that is organized without being "logical" and that creates its own referent as more "real" than anything "real" that could be "re-presented."

We are not saying that this meaning is "indissociable" from a form; rather, we say that it *is* form (*eidos*), it exists only in and through form (which has nothing to do with the adoration of an empty form for its own sake, characteristic of the inverted academicism that is "modernism" today). Now, what also is dying today are the forms themselves, and, perhaps, the inherited categories (genres) of creation. Cannot it legitimately be asked whether the novel form, the framed-painting form, the theatrical-play form are not outliving themselves? Independent of its concrete realization (as framed painting, fresco, etc.), is painting still alive? One should not become too easily irritated by these questions. Epic poetry has been quite dead for centuries, if not millennia. After the Renaissance, has there been great sculpture, with a few recent exceptions (Rodin, Maillol, Archipenko, Giacometti . . .)? The framed painting, like the novel, like the theatrical play, implies totally the society within which it arises. What, for example, is the novel today? From the internal wearing down of language to the crisis of the written word, from the distractions, diversions, and the way the modern individual lives or rather does not live time to the hours spent in front of the television set, does not everything conspire toward the same result? Could someone who spent his childhood and adolescence looking

at television forty hours a week read *The Idiot*, or an updated version of *The Idiot?* Could he gain access to novelistic life and time, could he adopt the posture of receptiveness/freedom necessary to allow himself to become absorbed in a great novel while at the same time making something of it for himself?

Perhaps what we have learned to call the *cultural work* itself is also in the process of dying: the enduring "object," destined in principle to an indefinite, individualizable temporal existence, and assigned by right to an author, to a social setting, to a precise date. There are fewer and fewer works, and more and more *products*, which, like the other products of the era, have undergone the same change in the determination of their temporality: destined not to endure, but to not endure. They also have undergone the same change in the determination of their origin: there no longer is anything essential about their relationship to a definite author. Finally, they have undergone the same change in the status of their existence: they no longer are singular or singularizable, but rather indefinitely reproducible examples of the same type. *Macbeth* is certainly an instance of the category "tragedy," but it is above all a singular totality: *Macbeth* (the play) is a *singular individual*—as the cathedrals of Reims or of Cologne are singular individuals. A piece of aleatoric music, the office towers I see on the other side of the Seine, are not singular individuals except in the "numerical" sense, as the philosophers say.

I am trying to describe changes. Perhaps I am mistaken, but in any case I am *not* speaking from feelings of nostalgia for an era when a genius designated by name created singular works through which he achieved full recognition from the (often very badly labeled "organic") community of which he was a part. This mode of existence for an author, for a work, for its form, and for its public is, obviously, itself a social-historical creation that can be roughly dated and localized. It appears in "historical" societies in the narrow sense, undoubtedly already in those of "oriental despotism," certainly since Greece (Homer and those who follow), and it culminates in the Greco-Western world. It is not the sole mode, and certainly not—even from the narrowest "cultural" point of view—the sole valid one. Neo-Greek demotic poetry is in broad terms as valid as Homer, as flamenco or gamelan is worth as much as any other great music, African or Balinese dances are far superior to Western ballet, and primitive statuary yields nothing to any other kind. Moreover, popular creation is not limited to "prehistory." It has long continued, in parallel with "learned" creation, beneath the latter, undoubtedly nourishing it most of the time. The contemporary era is in the process of destroying both high and low art.

Where is one to situate the difference between a popular art and what is done today? Not in the individuality nominally assigned at the work's origin—a practice unknown in popular art. Nor in the singularity of the work—which is not valued there as such. Popular creation, whether "primitive" or subsequent, certainly permits and even makes actively possible an indefinite variety of realizations, just as it makes room for the performer to achieve a particular excellence, the performer never being mere performer but rather creative through modulation: singer, bard, dancer, potter, or embroiderer. What characterizes it above all, however, is the type of relationship it maintains with time. Even when it is not made explicitly *in order to* endure, it in fact endures anyhow. Its durability is incorporated into its mode of being, into its mode of transmission, into its mode of transmitting the "subjective

capacities" that carry it along, into the mode of being of the collectivity itself. It thereby is situated at the extreme opposite end of contemporary production.

Now, the idea of the durable is not capitalist, nor is it Greco-Western. Altamira, Lascaux, prehistorical statuettes bear witness to this fact. But why then must there be durability? Why must there be works in that sense? When one lands for the first time in black Africa, the "prehistorical" character of the continent before colonization is staring one in the eyes: no solid [*en dur*] constructions, except those made by the whites or after them. And why, then, would one have to have at all costs solid constructions? African culture has proved to be as durable as any other, if not more so: to this day, the continual efforts of Westerners to destroy it have not been completely successful. It endures in another fashion, by means of other instrumentations, and especially by means of another condition; it is in destroying this condition that the invasion of the West is in the process of creating a monstrous situation, whereby the continent is deculturating without acculturating. It endures, where it does, by means of the continued cathecting of values and social imaginary significations proper to the different ethnic groups, which continue to orient their social making/doing and representing.

Now—and this is the other side of the "negative" statements formulated earlier about the era's official and learned culture—it really seems not only that a certain number of conditions for a new cultural creation are today being brought together, but also that such a culture, of a "popular" kind, is in the process of emerging. Innumerable groups of young people, with a few instruments, produce music that in no respect—except due to the vagaries of commercial promotion—differs from that of the Stones or Jefferson Airplane. Any individual with a minimum of taste, who has looked at paintings and photographs, can produce photographs as beautiful as the most beautiful. And, since we were speaking of solid constructions, nothing prevents one from imagining inflatable materials that would allow everyone to build his house, and change its form, if he wishes, every week. (I am told that, using plastic materials, these possibilities have already been experimented with in the United States.) I pass over the promises, known, discussed, and already in the process of being materialized, of inexpensive home computers: to each his own aleatoric music—or not. It will not be difficult to program the computer to compose and play a pastiche of Xenakis's *Nomos* or even a Bach fugue (the going would be more difficult with Chopin).

Nevertheless, it would be cheating to try to counterbalance the emptiness of present-day learned culture with what is trying to be born as a popular and diffuse culture. It is not only that this extraordinary broadening of possibilities and of savoir faire also and especially nourishes commercial "cultural" production (from the strict standpoint of film "shots," the shabbiest [Claude] Lelouch film is not worse than those he copies); it is that we cannot get around the mystery of originality and repetition. For forty years, the following question has been bugging me: Why would the *same* piece, let us say Beethoven's Sonata No. 33, written by someone today, be considered a mere amusement, but an imperishable masterpiece if it were suddenly discovered in some Viennese attic? (Clearly, the series ending with Opus 111 far from exhausts the possibilities of what Beethoven "could have discovered" at the end of his life—though it has had no sequel in musical history.) I have seen no one reflect

seriously on the question posed by the discovery, a few years ago, of the series of "fake Vermeers" that had long fooled all the experts. Well, what was "false" in these paintings, apart from the signature, which is of interest only to dealers and lawyers? In what sense does a signature take part in the pictorial work?

I do not know the answer to this question. Perhaps the experts were fooled because they very correctly judged the Vermeer "style," but had not the eyes for the flame. And perhaps this flame is related to what makes us believe that, without there being for it "any reason in our conditions of life on earth," we are "obliged to do the best, to be scrupulous, even to be polite" and that the "atheistic artist" believes himself "obliged to recommence twenty times a piece of work of which the admiration it will arouse will matter little to his worm-eaten body, like the yellow wall section painted with so much knowledge and refinement by a forever unknown artist, barely identified under the name of Vermeer." Proust, borrowing almost literally an argument from Plato, thought he had found here the sign of a before- and an afterlife of the soul. I see here simply the proof that we truly become individuals only by *dedication* to something other than our individual existence. And if this other thing exists only for us, or for no one—which is the same thing—we have not left mere individual existence, we are simply mad. Vermeer painted in order to paint—and that means, in order to bring into being something *for* someone or some ones for whom this thing would be painting. In being strictly interested only in his canvas, he established in a position of absolute value both his immediate public and indefinite and enigmatic future generations.

"Official," "learned" culture today is torn between what it salvages of the idea of the enduring work, and its reality, which it cannot fully accept: mass production of consumable, perishable items. For this reason, its life is lived as objectively hypocritical, with a bad conscience, thereby making it even more sterile. It has to act as if it is creating immortal works, *and* at the same time it must proclaim "revolutions" with accelerated frequency (forgetting that every well-conceived revolution begins by the practical demonstration of the mortality of the representatives of the Ancien Régime). It knows perfectly well that the buildings it constructs almost never have as much value (either aesthetically, or functionally) as an igloo or a Balinese house—but it would feel lost to admit it.

When, after the battle at Salamis, the Athenians returned home to their city, they found that the Hekatompedon and the other temples on the Acropolis had been burned and destroyed by the Persians. They did not set out to restore them. They used the remains to flatten the surface of the hilltop and to fill in the foundations for the Parthenon and the new temples. If Notre Dame were destroyed by a bombardment, it is impossible to imagine for an instant the French doing anything else with the debris than piously sweeping it up and attempting a restoration or leaving the ruins in state. *And they would be right.* For better some minuscule debris from Notre Dame than ten Pompidou towers.

The whole of contemporary culture, too, is torn between repetition of a necessarily empty and academic kind, since it is separated from what formerly assured the continuation/variation of a living tradition substantially tied to substantive social values, and a pseudoinnovation that is archacademic in its programmed and repetitive "antiacademicism," the faithful reflection, for once, of the collapse of substan-

tive inherited values. And this relationship, or absence of relationship, to substantive values is also one of the question marks weighing on neopopular modern culture.

No one can say what the values of a new society will be. No one can create them in its stead. We must look, however, "with sober senses" at what really is; we must hunt down illusions, saying loudly what we want; we must exit from the channels for the production and distribution of tranquilizers, while waiting for the change enabling us to break these circuits.

"Culture" is decomposing. How could it be otherwise when, for the first time in history, society cannot think or say anything about itself, about what it is and what it wants, about what for it is valid and not valid—and first of all, about the question whether it wants itself *as* society, and as *which* society? Today there is the question of socialization, of the mode of socialization and of what this mode implies as to substantive sociality. Now, the "external" modes of socialization are tending more and more to be modes of "internal" desocialization. Fifty million families, each isolated in its home and watching the television set, represent both "external" socialization pushed to a hitherto unknown degree and the most extreme sort of "internal" desocialization, privatization. It would be fallacious to say that it is the technical nature of the media that, as such, is responsible for the situation. Certainly, *this sort of* television fits *this sort of* society like a glove, and it would be absurd to believe that something in it could be changed if one were to change the "content" of the broadcasts. Technique and its utilization are inseparable from that of which they are the vectors. What is at issue is the inability/impossibility of present-day society not only and not so much to imagine, invent, and instaurate another usage of television, but to transform televisual technique in such a way as to enable individuals to communicate and to participate in a network of exchanges—instead of clustering them passively around a few broadcasting transmitters. And why? Because, for a long time already, the crisis has been gnawing away at positive sociality itself as substantive value.

There is, next, the question of historicity. The heteronomy of a society—as of an individual—expresses itself and becomes instrumented as well in the relationship it instaurates with its history and with history. Society can become stuck in its past, can repeat it—believe it is repeating it—interminably, this being the case with archaic societies or with most "traditional" societies. But there is another mode of heteronomy, one born before our very eyes: the supposed tabula rasa of the past, which is in truth—because there never really is a tabula rasa—the loss by society of its living memory, at the very moment its dead memory (museums, libraries, historical sites, data banks, etc.) is hypertrophying; the loss of a substantive and nonservile relationship to its past, to its history, to history—which amounts to saying: its self-loss. This phenomenon is only one aspect of the crisis of the historical consciousness of the West, coming after a historicism-progressivism pushed to absurd lengths (under its [classical] liberal or Marxist form). Living memory of the past and projects for a valued future are disappearing together. The question of the relationship between the cultural creation of the present and the works of the past is, in the most profound sense, the same as that of the relationship between the creative self-instituting ac-

tivity of an autonomous society and what is already given in history, which could never be conceived of as mere resistance, inertia, or servitude. We have to oppose to false modernity as well as to fake subversion (whether these find expression in supermarkets or in the discourses of certain stray leftists) a resumption and a recreation of our historicity, of our mode of historicization. There will be radical social transformation, a new society, autonomous society, only in and through a new historical consciousness, which implies both a restoration of the value of tradition and another attitude toward this tradition, another articulation between this tradition and the tasks of the present/future.

A break with enslavement to the past qua past; a break with the stupidities of the "tabula rasa"; a break, too, with the mythology of "development," the phantasms of organic growth, the illusions of acquisitive cumulation. These negations are only the other side of a position: the affirmation of substantive sociality and historicity as values of an autonomous society. Just as we have to recognize in individuals, groups, and ethnic minorities their genuine alterity (which does not imply that we have to conform to this alterity, for that would be another way of misrecognizing or abolishing it) and to organize on the basis of such recognition genuine coexistence, so the past of our society and of other societies invites us to recognize in it, to the (uncertain and inexhaustible) extent to which we can know it, something other than a model or a foil. This choice is indissociable from the one that makes us want a just and autonomous society, in which free and equal autonomous individuals live in mutual recognition. Such recognition is not merely a mental operation, but also and especially an *affect*.

And here, let us renew our own link with tradition:

> It seems that cities are held together by *philia*, and that legislators care more about it than justice. . . . Justice is not necessary for *philoi*, but the just have need of *philia* and the highest form of justice participates in *philia*. . . . The aforesaid [i.e., true] *philiai* exist in equality. . . . To the extent that there is communion/community, to that same extent there is *philia*; and also, justice. And the proverb, "everything is common for *philoi*" is correct, for *philia* is in the communion/community. (*Nichomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1, 6, and 9)

Aristotle's *philia* is not the "friendship" of translators and moralists. It is the genus, of which friendship, love, parental or filial affection, etc., are the species. *Philia* is the tie that binds mutual affection and valuing. And in its supreme form it can exist only in equality—which, in political society, implies freedom, or what we have called autonomy.

December 1978

Note

1. T/E: This statement appears in English and in italics in the original French text.

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Socialism and Autonomous Society

For the title of this book [*Le Contenu du socialisme*], I have retained the title of two of its principal texts. Nevertheless, it is obvious that henceforth the terms "socialism" and "communism" are to be abandoned. Of course, the signification attached to any word in language is, theoretically and at the outset, conventional and arbitrary. This, however, is precisely what also makes significations ultimately be only what they have become through actual historical usage. To give a purer meaning to the words of a tribe is perhaps the task of the poet or the philosopher; it certainly is not the politician's. Whether one deplores it or not, for the overwhelming majority of people today socialism signifies the regime instaurated in Russia and in similar countries—"really existing socialism," as Mr. Brezhnev has aptly put it—a regime that brings exploitation, oppression, totalitarian terror, and cultural cretinization to new heights in human history. Or it signifies parties directed by Messrs. Mitterrand, Callaghan, Schmidt, *et alii*, namely, "political" cogs of the established order in Western countries. These massive realities cannot be combated through etymological and semantic distinctions. That would be like wanting to combat the bureaucracy of the Church by reminding people that *ecclesia* originally signified the assembly of the people—here, of the faithful—and that, in relation to this originary *meaning*, the *real power* of the Pope, of the Vatican, of the cardinals, and so on, constitutes a usurpation.

Indeed, should we, in the case being discussed, even be deploring the fate of these words? That their utilization by Leninist-Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies has been one of the greatest instruments of mystification in history is certain. That, how-

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ever, is something that has already happened, and we can do nothing about it. Besides that fact, we must also note that from the outset the terms were "bad"—inasmuch as a word can be. Either they are tautologous or they are dangerously ambiguous. What does it mean to be "socialist," or even "communist"? To advocate society, sociality (or community)—and to be against what? Every society has always been, and always will be, "socialist." It would be merely a truism to say that every society is social or is not a society. Society is always "socialist" because it is always arranged with a view toward its maintenance as instituted society, and instituted in this or that given way, and because it *subordinates everything* to this maintenance—to its preservation, conservation, affirmation, and reproduction as this or that society. The most wildly individualistic society is still "socialist" in the sense that it affirms and imposes this signification, this fabrication, this *social* (and thus not natural, rational, or transcendent) value that is the individual. What, in the human being, is not socially fabricated individual (the sayable representation that "I am an individual, such and such an individual," obviously is a part of this fabrication, and is one of its results) is the psychical monad, which lies at the boundary of the knowable and the accessible and is, as such, radically unfit for life. Not just for life in society, but for life itself. For, as such, the psychical monad is radically mad—arational, afunctional. Even if this elementary fact has been placed at the center of our reflection on the subject since Freud and thanks to him, it has always been known and formulated by thinkers as varied as Plato, Aristotle, and Diderot. It is only by means of its occultation that, for the past ten years, new varieties of confusion and mystification have been able to flourish—the glorification of "desire" and of the "libido," the discovery of a "mimetic" desire, and the latest bit of junk launched onto the market by the advertising department of the ideas industry: a pseudo-"religious" revival of classical liberalism.[1] Such as they are, and whatever they say, all share the same incredible postulate: the fiction of an "individual" that would come into the world fully equipped and determined as to its essential features and that would be corrupted, oppressed, enslaved by society—by sociality as such.

Or else the term "socialism" is ripe with a dangerous ambiguity. It seems to posit a material, substantive, "value-laden" primacy for society over the individual—as if there could be "choices," "options," for society and against the individual. On the theoretical level, the level of ideas and concepts, such an opposition is, as I just said, nonsense. It is also fallacious, and mystificatory, on the practical level. It remains caught in bourgeois philosophy and bourgeois ideology, in the false problematic created by this ideology. It ultimately becomes an ideological cover for totalitarianism, as it nourishes, by opposition, a pseudoindividualism or pseudoliberalism.

Victorian society, and more generally the society of classical and "liberal" capitalism, is "individualistic"; at least, it proclaims to be so. What does this mean? That it allows a small minority of "individuals," which it fabricates, to oppress and to exploit the great majority of the other "individuals." It functions *against* the "individual" in 90 percent of cases. And what does the fact that Russian society today is a society of exploitation and oppression signify? Is it that each individual is oppressed and exploited for the benefit of the collectivity, that is to say, for the benefit of all the others (and therefore, also, of itself)? Certainly not. Each of the individuals making up the Russian people is not oppressed and exploited by the Russian people,

but by the Communist bureaucracy—that is to say, by a particular sociological grouping of individuals. Russian society is an authentically "individualistic" society —for 10 percent of the individuals making up this society.

Societies that fabricate servile individuals—that is to say, nearly all known societies, apart from the Greek democratic city and its modern inheritors—are not enslaved to the *collectivity*, which, once again, would make no sense. They are enslaved to the given *institution* of society, which is another matter entirely. The savage is not enslaved to the tribe as actual collectivity; he *and* the collectivity are enslaved to the rules established by the "ancestors." The Jew, the Christian, the Moslem are not enslaved to the Jewish, Christian, or Moslem collectivity; they are slaves of the given institution of their society, of a Law that is immutable and intangible, since its origin is imputed to a transcendent source, God.[2] Even in Greece, at Sparta, the Spartan is not enslaved to the Spartans, but to Sparta and to what makes Sparta Sparta: not its geographical location, but its laws, which are posited as intangible and are attributed, in the main, to a mythical or mythified founder, Lycurgus. The mythical origin of the law, like God's gift of the Tables of the Law to Moses, like Christian revelation or Moslem prophecy, has the same signification and the same function: to ensure the conservation of a heteronomous institution of society by incorporating into this institution the representation of an extrasocial origin of the law, which is thereby posited, by definition and by its essence, as removed from the instituting activity of human beings.

On the other hand—and this is a truism—where there has been a rupture of instituted heteronomy, we witness the simultaneous appearance of the autonomous individual and the autonomous collectivity. More exactly, we witness the appearance of the *political idea* and the *political question* of the autonomy of the individual and of the collectivity, each of which is possible and has meaning only through the other. We are speaking of the individual as we know it on the basis of a few examples and as we want it for everyone; we are speaking of the autonomous individual, which—while knowing that it is caught up within a senseless [*a-sensé*] world order/disorder—wills itself and makes itself responsible for what it is, for what it says, for what it does. This individual is born at the same time as, and through the same movement by which, the city, the polis, emerges as *autonomous* collectivity. That is to say, it does not receive its laws from any instance that would be external or superior to it. Rather, it posits these laws itself for itself. The rupture of mythical or religious heteronomy, the contesting of instituted social imaginary significations, the recognition of the historically *created* character of the institution—of the law, of *nomos*—are, to a blinding degree, inseparable from the birth of philosophy, from unlimited interrogation, and knows no innerworldly or otherworldly authority—just as the birth of philosophy is impossible and inconceivable outside of democracy.

In Greece, democracy was also called at the outset *isonomy*, equality of the law for everyone. But what is the law? The law is not only the "formal" law, which in modern societies is written, law in the narrow sense. Law is the institution of society. Equality and liberty—I will return to the relationship between these two ideas—cannot be limited to some domains alone, so that one would guarantee, for example, the equal right of all individuals to a legal defense in court, while "forgetting" the

actual operation of these courts, which could—and in reality today, even in so-called democratic societies, do—make of this equality the mask for inequality. Equality and liberty cannot be the liberty and the equality of all to establish an individual "company"—when at the same time the *actual* institution of society makes of this right a sinister mockery for four-fifths of all individuals. I do not remember which socialist (it was [Edward] Bellamy, I think) who noted the fact that, with equal rigor, the law forbids everyone, rich and poor, from sleeping under bridges. Today some people trot out Hayek's, Schumpeter's, and Popper's arguments about "private property" and "free enterprise" as foundations of democracy and freedom [*liberté*] (without, of course, mentioning where these arguments came from and presenting them as new)—and they continue to cover up the fact that private property and free enterprise, as they operate in the conditions of the modern world, are only the institutional mask for actual domination by a small minority.

The inequality and servitude, the exploitation and oppression characteristic of Western capitalist societies are not given any backing or justified by the fact that—with one or several decades of delay, depending upon individual cases and histories—some people are now discovering or are pretending to discover the horrors of Stalinist or Maoist totalitarianism. Criticism of the *actual* way in which "individual rights" function in societies dominated by a minority is not canceled out because some people have recognized the fact that rights *wrested* from capitalism by people's struggles in Western countries are not merely "formal." These rights have never been "formal" (in the sense of "empty"); they have always been, however, *partial, incomplete*—and they remain so. They will necessarily, tautologically, remain so, so long as society remains asymmetrically and antagonistically divided between directors and executants, rulers and ruled.

What was intended by the term "socialist society" we henceforth call autonomous society. An autonomous society implies autonomous individuals—*and vice versa*. Autonomous society, autonomous individuals: free society, free individuals. Freedom—but what is freedom? And what freedom? What is at issue is not philosophical or metaphysical freedom: the latter exists or does not, but if it does, it is as absolute and inviolable for a Descartes reflecting in his garret as for the prisoner beaten and tortured by the Gestapo, the KGB, or the Argentine police. What is at issue is not inner freedom, but *effective, social, concrete* freedom, namely, to mention one primary feature, the largest possible *space for movement and activity* the institution of society can ensure for the individual. This freedom can exist only as dimension and mode of the institution of society. And the institution of society is what politics in the authentic sense of the term intends. Only a moron or a charlatan (our era offers a rich sampling of these two varieties in their apparently paradoxical combinations) can claim to be interested in freedom and to be disinterested in the question of "the State," in the question of politics.

Now, in this sense, freedom implies actual *equality*—and vice versa. Conceived in this way, equality of course is meant in its social, instituted sense—not metaphysical or "natural" equality, but equality of rights and of duties, of all rights and duties, and of all the *effective possibilities of making/doing* [*faire*] that depend, for each person, on the institution of society. For, to take an example, social inequality is always also inequality of *power*: it becomes immediately inequality of participation in in-

stituted power. How then can you be *free* if the others have *more power* than you? In its effective social sense, power is bringing someone or some ones to make/do what they would not have otherwise, in full knowledge of the relevant facts, *willed* to make/do. Now, as the idea of a society without any power at all is an incoherent fiction, the first part of the response to the question of freedom is equal participation of all in power. A free society is a society in which power is actually [*effectivement*] exercised by the collectivity, but a collectivity in which all effectively participate in equality. And this equality of effective participation, as goal to attain, must not remain a purely formal rule; it must be ensured, as much as possible, by actual institutions.

Let us open a parenthesis here. I have already said that the idea of a society without any power is an incoherent fiction. One might be tempted to say that an autonomous society would aim simply at limiting to the greatest extent possible the field pertaining to collective power in order to enlarge to the maximum extent possible the field of effective individual autonomy. That, however, is only half true. Clearly, contemporary society's heteronomy (even in its most "democratic" forms) implies much more than an undue, unjustified, unnecessary limitation; it implies a mutilation of individual autonomy—of the field of movement and activity of individuals, as well as, moreover, of the various particular collectivities making up society. It in no way follows, however, that an autonomous society must intend, as end in itself, the disappearance of all collective power. Only for those fragments of human beings that are contemporary pseudoindividualist intellectuals is the collectivity evil. Freedom is freedom to make/do—and making/doing is power to make/do all alone as well as power to make/do with others. To make/do with others is to participate, to become engaged, to connect with others in a shared activity—and to accept an organized coexistence and collective undertakings in which decisions are made in common and executed by all those who have participated in their formation.

The confusion over the relationship between freedom and equality dates back a long time. It exists in as profound a thinker as Tocqueville,[3] and Marx (in his naive contempt for the political question, which constituted the flip side of his naive belief that all questions would be solved, or rather dissolved, once the relations of production were transformed) did nothing to dissipate it. This confusion is possible only if one holds to the most superficial, the most inconsequential, the most formal acceptations precisely of the terms "freedom" and "equality." As soon as they are given their full weight, as soon as they are provided with the ballast of instituted social actuality, they appear indissociable. Only equal men can be free, and only free men can be equal. Since there necessarily is *power* in society, those who do not participate in this power on an equal footing come under the domination of those who do participate in it and exercise it, and therefore they are not free—even if they have the *idiotic* illusion of being so because they would have decided to live and die *idiots*, that is to say, as mere private individuals (*idioteuein*). And such participation—this is evidently one of the points on which the modern workers' movement has gone further than the Greek democracy—can be equal only if the actual social (and not just juridical) conditions granted to all are equal. Conversely, in a society in which people are not free, there can be no equality. No need to argue the point: other men exercise

all sorts of powers over these unfree men, and between the free and the unfree an essential inequality is instaurated.

Sad but true, one can still hear today that socialism achieves equality but to the detriment of freedom, that we should therefore opt for regimes that preserve freedom while sacrificing equality. Let us pass over the tacit assumption that total and totalitarian bureaucratic-capitalist regimes would be "socialist." When questions as serious as this are discussed, one cannot limit oneself to endorsing sociologically and politically the name a regime gives itself (if one did so, one would then also have to accept the Stalinist assertion that the Russian constitution is the most democratic in the world—and the argument falls under its own weight). But, pray tell me, where have self-proclaimed "socialist" regimes ever *achieved equality?* What kind of economic, social, political equality is there between the bureaucratic caste ruling in Russia or in China, the middle-level bureaucracy, and the masses of workers, peasants, service workers, petty employees, and lower-level functionaries? The regimes that have usurped the term "socialism" are not only "less liberal" (a sinister litotes) than others, they are certainly also much more strongly *inegalitarian*, and this from *all* points of view (*including* from the real economic standpoint). Let us leave aside, however, the other points of view in order to avoid quibblings over secondary issues: How can one say that equality has been achieved in a society in which some can put others in concentration camps? What is this strange (pseudo-Marxist) blindness that identifies equality in general, and even economic equality, with the elimination of private owners of the means of production—and their replacement by a privileged, irremovable self-coopting, self-perpetuating, ruling bureaucracy—and cannot see that only the *form* of inequality has thereby been changed?

A strange amnesia, too, which has wiped out two centuries, at least, of social criticism and sociological analysis going to show the partial, truncated, diverted and dissuasive, and so often fictive and illusory character of liberties and freedom under the capitalist republic. Once again, what does one mean by liberties? Have capitalist societies ceased to be societies of domination? If the majority of society is dominated by a minority, can this majority be called free?

One cannot claim to be interested in "freedom" and then reduce it to a limited, and essentially "passive" aspect, that of "individual rights." Neither can one reduce "individual rights" to the narrow juridico-political sphere to which they are confined in the countries labeled "democratic." Freedom requires, first of all, the elimination of the instituted domination of every particular group within society. The institution of this domination is not formally "written" into modern constitutions. The Russian constitution does not explicitly state that society is dominated by the Party/State bureaucracy any more than constitutions in Western countries mention that society is dominated by groups of capitalists and big bureaucrats. There is no doubt that, in the second case, both individual rights and the political regime in the narrow sense, as well as many other factors, limit this domination and sometimes permit a counterbalancing of such domination or effective opposition to it.[4] That, however, is not the subject of our discussion.

Everything happens as if the sudden "discovery" of Russian totalitarianism by a few late adolescents and some other more mature and slightly overripe melons

functioned so as to throw a new veil of mystification over the depths of the social and political question. Here again, strange objective collusions knot together. The Russian people are atrociously oppressed. They are not, however, only oppressed. They are also *exploited*, as few other peoples are. On that point, the new and comfortable Western champions of "human rights," no more than Stalinists, Trotskyists, CERESians,[5] and the "Socialists," utter not a word. Now, other people are exploited, too. Let us grant, to shorten discussion, that the struggle for "political rights" in the narrow sense precedes other struggles, and let us suppose that, by some miracle, the Russian bureaucracy is led to "democratize" its rule. Would that mean that Russia's social and political question has been settled? Would the social and political question in France today be resolved by the elimination of judicial and police "errors"?

Long live freedom! But watch out: freedom must stop at the company gates. No question of being free in one's job. (And no question that those who really work are free, for the intellectual who discourses on this question is, himself, free in his "work," insofar as his mental constitution allows.) One can continue one's parrotlike litanies on Marx the precursor of totalitarianism, and so forth, but one will remain the slave of his fundamental (and capitalistic) postulate: work is the realm of necessity, which amounts to saying: slavery. Apart from that, one tells the tale that self-management is a form of totalitarianism. Indeed, how could we ever have doubted that an assembly line is the most perfected form of the monotheistic republic and the chosen land of true spiritual freedom? There is nothing left to do but, mentally, try to communicate with an undiscoverable transcendence.

Men who are slaves in their work, the greater part of their waking life, and who then fall asleep, exhausted, in front of a brutalizing and manipulatory television set are not and cannot be free. The suppression of heteronomy both ends the domination of particular social groups over the whole of society and modifies the relationship instituted society has with its institution; it breaks society's enslavement to its institution. Both aspects appear with blinding clarity in the case of production and work. The domination of a particular group over society could not be abolished without abolishing the domination of particular groups over the production and work process—without abolishing the bureaucratic hierarchy in the business firm, as everywhere else. From then on, the only conceivable mode of organization for production and work is *collective management* by all those who participate, as I have not ceased to argue since 1947.[6] Later on, this was called "self-management" [*autogestion*]—usually in order to make of it a reformist cosmetic for the existing state of affairs or a "testing ground" while carefully remaining quiet about the colossal implications, upstream and downstream, of the idea of self-management. Here I will mention only two of these implications, which I had already brought out in 1955–57 in the first two parts of "On the Content of Socialism."[7] Genuine collective management, active participation by everyone in all shared endeavors, would be inconceivable in practical terms if pay differentials were to be maintained. (Moreover, *strictly nothing*, in any respect, could justify their maintenance.) Self-management implies equality in all wages, incomes, etc. On the other hand, self-management would rapidly collapse from within if it were only a question of "self-managing" the existing piling up of excrement. Self-management could neither consolidate itself nor develop unless it entailed, immediately, a conscious transformation of existing

technology—of instituted technology—so as to adapt this technology to the needs, wishes, and wills of human beings both as producers and as consumers. Now, not only do we not see how any a priori limits could be set on this transformation, but it is *evident* that there could be none. One can, if one wants, call self-management "self-organization." But self-organization *of what?* Self-organization is also the self-organization of the (socially and historically inherited) *conditions* within which this self-organization unfolds. And these conditions, instituted conditions, embrace everything: the machines, tools, and instruments of work, but just as much its products; the work setting, but also living spaces, that is, one's habitat, and the relationship between the two; and, of course, also and especially its present and future subjects, human beings, their social training [*formation*], their education in the deepest sense of the word—their *paideia*. Self-management and self-organization are either collections of sounds employed to amuse people or they signify precisely this: the *explicit* self-institution of society, knowing itself as such and elucidated as much as possible. This is the conclusion one reaches, whether one approaches the question most concretely, in daily life, or most abstractly, most philosophically.[8]

Freedom does not have merely the "passive" or "negative" aspect of protecting a sphere of individual existence in which its autonomous power of making/doing [*pouvoir-faire*] would be recognized and guaranteed by law. Even more important is its active and positive aspect, on which depends, moreover, in the long and even in the short term, the preservation of the former. Laws are scraps of paper without the activity of citizens; judges and courts cannot remain impartial and incorruptible in a society of "individualistic" sheep who have no interest in what power does. Freedom (autonomy) necessarily implies active and egalitarian participation in all social power where decisions concerning common affairs are made. The liberal-*idiotic* intellectual can, if he is sufficiently stupid, think he is free to enjoy the privileges the instituted social order confers on him, forgetting thereby that he has decided nothing about the junk sold him, about the news presented to him, or about the air he breathes. And he can remain in this idiotic state until the day he will freely receive on his head an H-bomb, the launching of which has been freely decided by others. To be able to decide, however, is not only to be able to decide about "current affairs," to participate in a state of affairs considered sacrosanct. Autonomy signifies giving oneself one's own law. And we are speaking here of "formal" and "informal," common or shared laws, namely, institutions. To participate in power is to participate in *instituting power*. It is to belong, in equality with others, to a collectivity that self-institutes itself explicitly.

Freedom in an autonomous society is expressed by these two fundamental laws:

No execution [of decisions] without egalitarian participation in the making of decisions; and

no law without egalitarian participation in the positing of the law.

An autonomous collectivity has for its motto and self-definition, "*We are those whose law is to give ourselves our own laws.*"

This active and positive aspect of freedom, of the autonomy of society, is indissociably linked to the question of the autonomy of the individual. An autonomous

society implies autonomous individuals – and such individuals can fully exist only in an autonomous society. Now, what each does, both with regard to the collectivity and with regard to himself, depends to a decisive degree on his social fabrication as an individual. "Inner freedom" itself, not only in the sense of *effective freedom to think*, but even in the sense of "free will," depends on the institution of society and on what kind of individual this institution produces. "Free will" never can be exercised except between alternatives actually given to the individual that appear to the individual as *possible*. "Free will" will never allow the subject of an oriental despot to think that, perhaps, the God-King is simply crazy, or feeble-minded. No Jew of the classical era is "free" to think that perhaps everything recounted in Genesis is only a myth. Before Greece, no member of any society has ever had, as far as we know, the possibility of thinking, Our laws are perhaps bad, our gods are perhaps false gods, our representation of the world is perhaps purely conventional. Hegel was highly mistaken when he said that the Asiatic world experienced the freedom of a single person, the Greco-Roman world the freedom of a few. The "single" Asiatic person – the monarch – is not "free," he can think only what the institution of society makes him think. And if Greece inaugurates freedom in a profound sense, despite slavery and the condition of women, it is that everyone *can* think otherwise. For the individual to be able to think "freely," even inwardly, society must raise and educate it, fabricate it as *individual capable of thinking freely*, something very few societies in history have done. To do so, the *creation*, the institution, of a *public space* for thought open to interrogation is required. Quite obviously this immediately excludes the positing of law – of the institution – as immutable, just as it radically excludes the idea of a transcendent source of the institution, of a law given by God or by the gods, by Nature, or even by Reason, at least if by Reason is meant a set of exhaustive, categorical, and atemporal determinations, if is meant thereby anything other than the very movement of human thought. At the same time and correlatively, this implies an education in the profoundest sense, a *paideia* that forms individuals to have the effective possibility of thinking by themselves – which, once again, is *the last thing in the world* human beings would possess from birth or by divine endowment. Let us add that to think by oneself is psychically impossible, not only if someone else, designated by name (herebelow or in Heaven), is posited as source of truth but also if what one thinks or does not think matters little or makes no difference – in other words, if one does not hold oneself *responsible*, not for one's fantasies but for one's words and deeds (which are the same thing).

The radical questioning of the instituted imaginary and the aim of democracy, which were born in and through the ancient city, were taken up again in the modern era by the intellectual and political movement that had its first culmination in Enlightenment philosophy and the American and French Revolutions of the eighteenth century (which themselves were anticipated, in part, by the English Revolution of the seventeenth century). From the beginning of the nineteenth century, and half a century before Marx first came into the picture, the nascent workers' movement adopted these as their own while considerably enlarging upon them. This enlargement expressed itself in the transcendence [*dépassement*] – and not the forgetting – of the narrow "political" field. From its origins, with the idea of the "social

republic," the workers' movement extends the signification and the aim of democracy. Criticism of the established order and democratic demands tackle not only the issue of the "political" system of rule in the narrow sense, but also those of economic organization, education, and the family. This becomes clearly manifest in the osmosis that occurs between the workers' movement and the various currents of "utopian" socialism during the entire first half of the nineteenth century, and even afterward—in fact, until the Marxist noose was tightened around, and finally came to choke, the movement's social creativity.

At the outset, and sometimes also later on, Marx was inspired by the best in this historical creation. From the outset too, however, he displayed the rationalistic, scientistic, theoreticist tendency that rapidly gained the upper hand and practically crushed the other one. This second tendency induced him to seek an overall and complete explanation of society and of history, to believe that he had discovered it in the "determining" role of production, and, finally, to erect the "development" of production into the universal key for the comprehension of history and the Archimedean point for the transformation of society. Marx was thereby led, in fact—and regardless of what at times he might have continued to think and to say—to narrow down greatly the field of the movement's preoccupations and aims; to concentrate completely on questions of production, economy, and "classes" (defined on the basis of production and economy); and, quite naturally, to ignore or to play down all the rest, saying or implying that the solution to all other problems would arrive as part of the bargain when the capitalists were expropriated. The political question in the broad sense (the question of the overall institution of society) and the political question in the narrow sense—power, its nature, how it is organized, the possibility of the collectivity effectively exercising it, and the problems this exercise of power raises—are ignored or, at best, envisaged as corollaries that will be established as soon as the main theorem is demonstrated in the practice of revolution.

That Marx and Marxism were on that basis able to exercise a preponderant (and in truth catastrophic) influence over the workers' movement in numerous countries is not simply the effect of Marx's genius—and still less of some kind of Satanism on his part. The centrality and sovereignty of production and of the economy (and the corresponding *reduction* of the entire social and political problematic) are *nothing other* than the organizing themes of the dominant imaginary of that era (and of ours): the *capitalist* imaginary. As I have tried to show since 1955 (in the first two parts of "On the Content of Socialism," in "Proletariat and Organization," in "Modern Capitalism and Revolution," in my "General Introduction," and in "The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement,"[9] the workers' movement's "reception" of Marxism, Marxism's penetration into it, has in fact been the reintroduction into or the resurgence within this movement of the principal social imaginary significations of capitalism, of those significations from which it had tried to disengage itself during the preceding period.

The confusion and interference Marx and Marxism thus introduced into the ideas, categories of thought, and objectives of the socialist workers' movement have been enormous in all areas, and we are still paying for the consequences (were it only each time someone tells you, Yes, but Russia is socialist, since there no longer are any capitalists). Nowhere, however, has this confusion been more pernicious than

in the field of politics proper. I will try to provide an illustration with one particularly "rich" example: the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." An almost impossible knot of mystification, it has become a sinister and macabre farce since 1917[10].

Marx considered one of his original contributions to be the idea that a historical phase, characterized by the "dictatorship of the proletariat," is inserted between capitalism and communism.[11] This term long signified for Marx the proletariat's dictatorial use of the existing state power and the state apparatus, for the purpose of transforming society. In this, Marx fell *short* of the historical experience he had before his eyes. He proved incapable of drawing the conclusion that follows from the Great French Revolution—which is quite in keeping with his own "theory of history"—namely, that the Revolution had not and simply could not use the old [*ancien*] "state apparatus" for its own purposes, that the Revolution had to overturn this apparatus completely, that the Revolution had been marked, in this as in all other domains, by extraordinary and profoundly innovative instituting activity from 1789 until at least Thermidor. Even the most brilliant of thinkers sometimes walks crab style.

Marx had to await the creation in 1871 of a new institutional form by the workers and people of Paris, the Commune, to see in this creation the "finally found form" of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and to draw the obvious lesson that the Socialist Revolution cannot simply make use of the old state apparatus, that it has to destroy this apparatus and create in its place a power "which is no longer a State in the proper sense of the term" because it is nothing other than the people organized, because it is characterized by the election and permanent revocability of all those who exercise public "functions," by the abolition of the privileges of officialdom [*fonctionnaires*], etc. This is the conception, as we know, that Lenin defended in 1917, *before* October, in *State and Revolution*. Neither Marx nor Engels nor Lenin spoke for a single second of the *Party* as "organ" (and still less as "leading organ") of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." They can be reproached for having *ignored* precisely the problem of the party and of parties—namely, that of possible and even inevitable political divisions *within* the "proletariat." But they cannot be criticized for having, in their *writings*, *identified* the power of the proletariat with the power of "its" party.

After October, in Lenin—and in Trotsky—a radical change took place. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin explained that the power of the proletariat is nothing but the power of mass organs, that every state apparatus *separate* from the population must disappear, and so forth. The very term "Party" does not exist as a political concept in *State and Revolution*. Now, as soon as power is "taken," the practice of Lenin, of Trotsky, and of the Bolshevik party has strictly nothing to do with this previous conception: *one-party rule* quickly settles in and is consolidated. It is of no avail to bring up the petty arguments Lenin and especially Trotsky later tried to use to justify this practice. To say that the Bolshevik party was obliged in self-defense to assume power on its own because all the other parties were betraying or combating the revolution is a pure and simple lie: neither the anarchists nor all Socialist Revolutionaries nor even the Mensheviks were opposed to the revolution, they were opposed to Bolshevik policy. In truth, the "justification" of one-party rule was

clearly given by Lenin two or three years later, in *"Left-Wing" Communism–An Infantile Disorder*, using the same kind of plodding arguments as are found in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*: in society, there are classes; classes are represented by parties; parties are led by leaders. That is the only point made there. To every class ("truly") corresponds one and only one party, to every party one and only one possible political line–therefore, also, one and only one team of leaders, expressing, defending, representing this line.

How then could this position–which, taken in itself, would testify either to ignorance or to endless stupidity, neither of which, of course, can be attributed either to Lenin or to Trotsky–ever have gained any plausibility? There are only two possible ways. Both are anchored to the bottommost depths of the Marxian *system*, and both illustrate once again the antinomy between this system and the revolutionary germs of Marx's thought still manifest in his recognition of the innovative character of the Paris Commune.

Either the proletariat arrives at the point of the revolution perfectly *homogenized*, not only from the point of view of its "position" within the relations of production and of its "interests" but also and especially with respect to the *representation* it gives itself of its position, of its interests, of its aspirations, etc., this homogenization also and necessarily including automatic or almost automatic agreement as to the *means* to be used in order to instaurate a new society. This, in its turn, would imply (a) that the evolution of the capitalist economy and of capitalist society *actually* performs such a homogenization as far as its essential features are concerned (and, to be rigorous about it, on a *worldwide* scale). In this regard, the cleavage of thought not only among Marxists but in Marx and Lenin themselves should be noted: on the one hand, they must uphold a theory of the capitalist economy and of capitalist society that will guarantee this homogenization (broadly speaking, the social chemistry of *Capital*, volume 1, whereby capital is constantly being deposited at the positive pole and the proletariat at the negative). On the other hand, they know for a fact that this image is false (cf. the *dicta* of the old Marx and of Engels on the English working class, or of Lenin, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, on the "labor aristocracy"). We know, of course, that such a homogenization does not and could not exist. Furthermore, the preceding condition being insufficient, the second implication is (b) that to this homogenization of "real existence" automatically corresponds a unified and adequate consciousness. "Real homogenization" would, indeed, serve no purpose if "illusions" and "false representations" were to persist. In other words, one will have to have recourse to the crudest, most mechanical version of "reflection theory," as was practiced by the likes of Mr. [Roger] Garaudy before he discovered the light of Christ.[12]

Or the flagrant absurdity and the practical futility of these fables being implicitly recognized, opposite an effectively nonhomogenized proletariat that has retained its "illusions," its "false representations" or, quite simply, this astonishing and unbearable human faculty for a diversity of opinions, must line up a faction, a Party, which, itself, has neither illusions nor false representations, nor opinions, for it possesses the truth, the true theory. It thus is able to distinguish between workers who think and act according to "the essence of their being" and the others who are workers only empirically and phenomenally, and as such can and should be reduced to si-

lence (at best, "educated" paternalistically; at worst, qualified as false workers to be sent to "reeducation camps" or shot). This theory being true (that is, according to the Marxian conception, it corresponds to the interests and the historical role of the proletarian class), it and the Party embodying it can pass over the heads and the cadavers of empirical workers to rejoin the essence of a metaphysical proletariat.

The various "positions" of Marxists today on this question are a "dialectical" concoction made from these two radically incompatible conceptions and held together principally by duplicity and bad faith.

But let us consider the thing in itself. Let us postulate (a pure hypothesis) the existence of a Marxist who recognizes reality, who therefore grants that the "proletariat" is not actually homogenized; that, homogenized or not, it can contain, or actually contains, varying currents of opinion; and that the possession of any theory neither permits (nor *authorizes*) one to discriminate between these opinions and to decide in the place of the proletariat and for it what is to be done and not to be done. Such a Marxist could be a "Council Communist" or a Luxemburgist ("Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee")[13] who would have rid himself of Rosa's mechanistic economics and who would keep his eyes open to see what was going on in the real world as it is today. Could such a Marxist still talk, while remaining coherent and honest, of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," understanding thereby the *dictatorship* of the autonomous collective organs of the *proletariat?*

Certainly not, and for several reasons.

First, because the very concept of the "proletariat" has become totally inadequate. It might have been meaningful to speak of the "proletariat" as "subject" of the socialist revolution when one believed that there was a concept not shot full of holes that could correspond to a massive and clear-cut social reality. This concept could have referred to manual workers or, as I thought all during the initial period of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, wage earners and salaried workers, whether manual or not, who have been reduced to roles of mere *execution*. Today, however, in the countries of modern capitalism, almost everyone is a wage earner or salaried worker. Manual laborers as well as "pure executants" have become a minority of the population. If one has this minority in mind, it is impossible to speak of the "dictatorship of the immense majority over an infinitesimal minority," as Lenin had done. If one speaks of "wage earners" and "salaried workers" in general, one ends up spouting absurdities: top engineers and bureaucrats, etc., would be included in the "proletariat"; small farmers [*petits paysans*] or craftsmen would be excluded therefrom. This is not some sociological discussion; what is at stake is political in character. Either the "dictatorship of the proletariat" signifies nothing, or else it signifies, among other things, that the strata not belonging to the proletariat have no political rights, or have only the limited rights the "proletariat" chooses to grant them. The present-day partisans of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" should have the courage to explain that they are, in principle, for the abolition of the political rights of farmers, craftsmen, massage therapists working at home, and so on; also, that the publication of medical, literary, philosophical, and other such journals should depend on ad hoc authorizations granted by "the workers."

Who, then, is "proletarian"? And who *defines* who is "proletarian" and who is not? Those who write about the distinction between productive and unproductive labor in *Capital?* Prostitutes working in a whorehouse for an (ex)boss would belong to the proletariat (according to Marx's criterion in the *Grundrisse*: they produce surplus value); those who are self-employed do not. The former would therefore have political rights, the others not. Yet, alas, precisely on the question of productive and unproductive labor, Marx contradicts himself, and the exegetes cannot figure out how to settle the matter. Will we have to await a settlement on this, and a few other questions, from the Central Committee?

In reality, what is at stake here is something much deeper than the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," or even "proletariat." It is the entire theory of "classes"; the full sovereignty attributed to the economy by the capitalist imaginary, which Marx inherited in full; finally, the whole conception of the transformation of society. (A grotesque version is to be found again today in the litanies recited by CERES[14] and others on the "class front." What "front," and what "class"?) Social transformation, the instauration of an autonomous society today concerns—as I have explained for a long time[15]—in fact and in principle nearly everyone (minus, perhaps, 5 or 10 percent of the population). It is nearly everyone's business—and only to the extent that nearly everyone makes this his business. May '68 provided a striking illustration, both positively and negatively (where was the "class front" in May '68?). This is not just a question of arithmetic, nor does it relate to the attitudes of this or that social stratum at this or that conjuncture. The historical preparation, the cultural and anthropological gestation period for social transformation cannot and will not be the work of the proletariat, either exclusively or as privileged participant. There is no question of granting to any social category in particular a sovereign or "hegemonic" position, any more than the contributions of various strata of society to this transformation can be hierarchized and subordinated to those of any one of these strata. The profound changes introduced into contemporary social life by movements that can have neither a "class" definition nor a "class" foundation—like those of women and youth—are just as important and germinal for the reconstruction of society as those introduced by the workers' movement. On this point, one can again observe the profoundly *reactionary* character of the Marxist outlook. If Marxists of all stripes—Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, socialists, and so forth—first ignored, then combated, and finally tried to coopt by emptying of their content the movements of women and youth, it is neither simply by myopia nor by imbecility. Here, for once, they were consistent with the underlying spirit of the outlook they profess is their own—certainly not by a sudden and immoderate love of consistency, which is not their strong suit, but because their politico-ideological existence depends on it: they exist as "directors" or "spokesmen" of the "proletariat." A Marxist is *obliged* to affirm that all these movements are minor or secondary—or he ceases to be Marxist. For his theory tells him that everything is subordinate to the "relations of production" and to the social classes defined by these relations; how could anything else of true importance have come from another source? Now, in fact, what has been put into question by the women's and youth movement, by the immense anthropological mutation they have unleashed, which is now underway and whose course and effects it is impossible to foresee, is sociologically just as important as what the workers'

movement has put into question; in a sense, even, more so, for the structures of domination these movements have assailed—the domination of male over female, the enslavement of the younger generations—precedes historically, for all we know, the instauration of a division of society into "classes" and is rooted very probably in much more deep-seated anthropological strata than the domination of some over the work of others.

The transformation of society, the instauration of an autonomous society involves a process of anthropological mutation that quite obviously could not and cannot be accomplished either uniquely or mainly in the production process. *Either* the idea of a transformation of society is a fiction without any interest, *or* the contestation of the established order, the struggle for autonomy, the creation of new forms of individual and collective life are invading and will invade (through conflict and with contradictions) all spheres of social life. And among these spheres, none plays a "determining" role, even "in the last instance." The very idea of any such "determination" is nonsense.

Lastly and especially, if the term and the idea of the "proletariat" have become hazy, the term and the idea of *dictatorship* in no way are and never have been so. What, quite obviously, distinguishes Lenin or Trotsky from the [Louis] Althussers, [Etienne] Balibars, and [Jean] Ellensteins is that they were not paid by the word. The political existence of a genuine statesman—be he totalitarian—cannot be confused with the political inexistence of needy ideological functionaries. It is of the same order as the difference between Ava Gardner and the ugly old maid eaten up by dreams in which she is Ava Gardner. Lenin knew what dictatorship always has meant and always means, and he expressed it admirably: "Like a blind puppy casually sniffing first in one direction and then in another, Kautsky accidentally stumbled upon *one* true idea (namely, that *dictatorship* is rule unrestricted by any laws)."[16] This is indeed the original and genuine meaning of the term "dictatorship." He who exercises power *dictates* what is to be done and is bound by nothing. Not only is he not bound by "moral laws," "basic" or "constitutional laws," "general principles" (as, for example, the nonretroactivity of laws—which a dictatorship can always ignore); he is bound by absolutely nothing: *not even by what he himself has dictated the day before.* Dictatorship signifies that the dictatorial power can shoot people today *because* they obeyed laws that it had itself decreed yesterday.

There is no point in saying on behalf of dictatorial power that such behavior would be absurd and counterproductive from its own point of view. Stalin spent a good part of his life doing exactly that. Nor is it a matter of knowing whether the (individual or collective) dictator might judge, in his own interests, that it would be better to avoid being arbitrary. It is a matter of understanding that to speak of dictatorship signifies abolishing all limits to the arbitrariness of power.

The idea that a power—Stalin or Mao, the proletariat or God the Father—unbound by all law could lead to anything other than total tyranny is absurd. "Dictatorship of the proletariat" implies that, in this or that particular case, the "organs of the proletariat" could change the definition of crimes and penalties as well as the rules of procedure and the judges. Were it to be exercised by Saint Francis of Assisi, we must struggle to the death against that kind of power.

All this is not a matter of quibblings and subtleties. We have the proof of the con-

trary at both ends of the human spectrum, the monstrous certainly, but also the sublime. The idea of a power unbound by law—"written," "positive" law—was, as we know, defended by Plato, and this within a problematic that cannot purely and simply be dismissed out of hand. What Plato says in the *Statesman* is that ideally opposed to law (which is like "an arrogant and ignorant man"[17] incapable of taking into account either changes in circumstances or individual cases) is the "royal man" who knows each time how to decree and to dictate what is just and what is not, to decide the specific case without crushing it beneath an abstract universal rule. In this sense, and strictly speaking, law is, for Plato, only a makeshift solution required by the deficiencies of human nature and in particular by the improbability of the "royal man" (or the "philosopher king," as he elsewhere writes). At the same time, however, Plato is realistic enough to write, twice over, the laws of that city that, in his view, would be just.

It can easily be shown that the discussion of law in the *Statesman* cannot be underestimated either in its profundity or as to its relevance for today. First, it is this discussion that opens up the question of *equity*, "at the same time justice and better than justice," as Aristotle profoundly said. Equity can *never*, by definition, be guaranteed by the law.[18] The question of equity is the question of the achievement of *effective* social equality—even in a "static" social setting—among ever unequal and dissimilar individuals. Second, and especially, for the reasons indicated by Plato, *never, absolutely never* could the question of justice be settled *simply* by law, and infinitely less still by a law given once and for all. Beyond all the imaginable, expedient "empirical" answers that could be provided, the question Plato poses brings out the depth of the *substantive* political problem. On the one hand, society cannot exist without law. On the other, the law, any law, does not and will never exhaust the question of *justice*. Furthermore, it can be said that, in a sense, law—right—is the *contrary* of justice; without this contrary, however, there can be no justice. Once society has exited from religious, traditional, or other forms of heteronomy, as autonomous society it will never be able to live except in and through this ineffaceable *gap*, which opens it to its proper question, the question of justice. *A just society is not a society that has adopted, once and for all, just laws. A just society is a society in which the question of justice remains constantly open.* In other words, a society in which there is always the socially effective possibility of questioning the law and its foundation. This is another way of saying that it is constantly in the movement of explicit self-institution.

Here again, Marx remains much more the Platonist than he believes, both when he advances the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and when he leaves the impression that, during the "higher phase of communist society," law ("by nature unequal," he says) would disappear, because there would be a "universal blossoming of individuals." Here the "total man" has simply taken the place of the "royal man."

Marx, like Plato, relativized the given law. And they were right to have done so. Nevertheless, they also relativized law as such. And here is where they slipped up. From the obvious and profound discovery that every law is always defective and inadequate, due to its abstract universality, Plato draws the "ideal" conclusion that the only just power would be that of the "royal man" or the "philosopher king" and the "real" conclusion that movement must be arrested, the collective must be cast once

and for all in a mold so calculated as to reduce as much as possible the in principle ineradicable gap between the actual "matter" of the city and the law. Marx draws the conclusion that, in arriving at a society of regulated spontaneities, law and right will have to be done away with, whether because the abolition of alienation would bring back man's original good nature or because "objective" social conditions and the rearing of subjects would permit a complete resorption of the institution and of its rules by the psychosocial organization of the individual. In both cases—as, moreover, in all hitherto existing political philosophy—there is a misrecognition of the essence of the social-historical, and of the institution, a misrecognition of the relationship among collectivity, law, and the question of law. Plato misrecognized the collectivity's capacity to create its own regulation. Marx dreamed of a state in which this regulation would become completely spontaneous. The idea of a society of regulated spontaneities, however, is simply incoherent. Aristotle would rightly have reminded him that such a society would hold good only for wild beasts, or gods. And if it were said that, in the "higher phase of communism" dreamed of by Marx, right and law would be superfluous because the rules of social coexistence would then have been completely interiorized by individuals and incorporated into their structure, we would have to fight to death against such an idea. A *totally* interiorized institution would be equivalent to the most absolute tyranny, and, at the same time, it would mark the halt of history. No distance with regard to the institution would any longer be possible, nor would a change in the institution be conceivable. We can judge and change the rule only if we *are not* the rule, only if the gap remains, only if an exteriority is maintained—only if the law is posited *opposite* us. This is the very condition that permits us to call it into doubt, that enables us to think otherwise.

To abolish heteronomy does not signify abolishing the difference between instituting society and instituted society—which, in any case, would be impossible—but to abolish the *enslavement* of the former to the latter. The collectivity will give itself its rules, knowing that *it itself* is giving them *to itself*, that these rules are or will always become at some point inadequate, that it can change them—and that they bind it so long as it has not changed them in a *regular way*.

April-May 1979

Notes

1. T/E: Castoriadis says "neoliberalism" here, which should not be confused with American or British "liberalism" and "neoliberalism," but assimilated rather to a contemporary revival of classical and "free-market" liberalism. An American would say "(neo)conservative" to describe this French "neoliberalism."

2. See *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 108–9, 212–15, and 371–73.

3. I know of only one passage where Tocqueville clearly conceives the *identity* of equality and freedom: "It is possible to imagine an extreme point at which freedom and equality would meet and be confounded together. Let us suppose that all the people take a part in the government, and that each one of them has an equal right to take a part in it. As no one is different from his fellows, none can exercise a tyrannical power; men will be perfectly free, because they are all entirely equal; and they will all be perfectly equal, because they are entirely free" (*Democracy in America*, ed. and abridged by Richard D. Heffner [New York: New American Library, 1956, 1984], section 26, p. 189). However, even in this pas-

sage Tocqueville speaks of an equal "right" to take part in government—ignoring the question of the effective equality of *conditions* for the exercise of this right by each person. On the difficulties of Tocqueville's thought in this regard, see Claude Lefort's article, originally published in *Libre*, 3 (1978): "From Equality to Freedom: Fragments of an Interpretation of Democracy in America," in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 183–209; and François Furet's "De Tocqueville and the Problem of the French Revolution," in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 132–63.

4. I have insisted on this point too often to have to return to it here. See, most recently, "The Social Regime in Russia," trans. David J. Parent, in *Telos*, 38 (Winter 1978–79), pp. 32–47.

5. T/E: CERES was the Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et d'Education Socialistes, a "left-wing" research group and political club led by Jean-Pierre Chevènement that was eventually integrated into the French Socialist party. It had revived, wholesale, Marxist terminology for application in its technocratic public policy formation work.

6. See my texts from the 1947–49 period in *SB 1, CMR 1*, and *SF*. [T/E: See the first seven chapters of *PSW 1*.]

7. T/E: See "On the Content of Socialism, I" in *PSW 1*, and "II," in *PSW 2*.

8. T/E: Castoriadis adds here, parenthetically, that his "concrete" investigations of the question are to be found in the articles published in *CS* and that his "abstract" investigations are to be found in *IIS*. All the articles in *CS* have been translated for the *PSW* series, with the exception of "Sur le programme socialiste" (1952); "Ce que signifie le socialisme" (1961), which originally appeared in English as "Socialism and Capitalism," in *International Socialism*, 4 (Spring 1961), pp. 20–27, and was republished, in slightly altered form, as "The Meaning of Socialism," *Solidarity Pamphlet*, 6 (1961); and "Discussion avec des militants du P.S.U." (1974).

9. T/E: All these articles have been translated for the *PSW* series, except for the second part of "Proletariat and Organization."

10. I have commented elsewhere on one of the latest episodes: the French Communist party's "abandonment" of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." See "The Evolution of the French Communist Party" [T/E: chapter 18, this volume].

11. Letter of Marx to J. Weydemeyer in New York, March 5, 1852, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 679.

12. T/E: Roger Garaudy (b. 1913) was one of the French Communist party's chief ideologists. His 1965 book, *De l'anathème au dialogue*, attempted to establish a dialogue between Marxists and Christians. He was eventually excluded from the Politburo, and then from the Party, for the position he took against the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

13. T/E: From "Organizational Question of Social Democracy" (1904), in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 130. Originally published in *Neue Zeit* and *Iskra*, in response to Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*

14. T/E: On CERES, see note 5.

15. See, among other texts, "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" [T/E: in *PSW 2*], as well as "Recommencing the Revolution" and "The Question of the History of the Workers' Movement," [T/E: chapters 3 and 12, respectively, this volume].

16. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), p. 10 (emphasis added on the word "dictatorship").

17. T/E: Plato, *Statesman*, 294c. As Castoriadis's French translation of this phrase differs slightly from the previous translation he provided (cf. "On the Content of Socialism, I," *PSW 1*, p. 300), so does my English translation.

18. See "Value, Equality, Justice, Politics: From Marx to Aristotle and from Aristotle to Ourselves" (1975), in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*, trans. Martin H. Ryle and Kate Soper (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, and Brighton: Harvester, 1984), pp. 260–339.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Table of Contents for Volume 1

Appendix B: Table of Contents for Volume 2

Appendix C: Glossary

We present here a small number of French words and their English-language equivalents, which might be of interest to the scholar. Given the absence of any significant translation complications, the text itself can stand on its own for the general reader without requiring special explanations, with the following few exceptions.

Unlike Castoriadis's later and more explicitly philosophical writings, the texts translated here contain few specialized terms and neologisms peculiar to the author's writings of this period. The only technical terms that appear in these texts come from the fields of philosophy, sociology, and economics (and often directly from Marx's writings). We usually have provided the standard translation term in these cases.

autogestion	*self-management.*
dépasser	*to outstrip, overcome, overtake, surmount.* Unlike Alan Sheridan-Smith's translation of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, we have only rarely used "to transcend."
direction	*direction* (as opposed to execution), *leadership* (of a political party, State, etc.), (the) *management* (of an enterprise, etc.).
dirigeant	*director* (as opposed to executant), *leader* or *ruler* (of a political party, State, etc.), *manager* (of an enterprise, etc.).
entreprise	*enterprise* (in Eastern or Western countries), *business, business enterprise, company,* or *firm* (in Western countries exclusively).
executant	*executant* (of tasks prescribed by a separate stratum of directors or managers in traditional or bureaucratic capitalism).
execution	*execution, carrying out* (of prescribed tasks). Opposed (in

	traditional or bureaucratic capitalism) to the functions of *direction*.
gestion	*management* (the act of managing). Also: *gestion ouvrière* ("workers' management"), and *gestionnaire*, which we have usually translated as "self-managerial" (as in "self-managerial activity").
instauration	*instauration* (act of instituting or establishing something anew or for the first time). According to *OED*, we are reviving (reinstaurating?) a now-obsolete meaning of a seventeenth-century English word. We do so because this term is so important for Castoriadis's thoughts on creation and institutionalization, especially in *IIS*. The more contemporary meaning, "the act of restoring" or "restoration"—with all of its political overtones—is exactly the opposite of what is meant here. Thus also, "to instaurate," etc. See Charles Whitney, "Bacon's *Instauratio*" (in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50:3 [July 1989], pp. 386–87), where Castoriadis's use of this term is briefly discussed.
parcellaire	*compartmentalized* (labor). We have used "compartmentalized worker" (and "compartmentalization") instead of Marx's "detail worker" or *Teilarbeiter*, since the word "detail" is not "detailed" enough, if you will, to describe "a laborer who all his life performs one and the same simple operation [and thus] converts his whole body into the automatic, specialized implement of that operation." (*Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pt. 7, sec. 2, p. 339.) Our phrase is not completely adequate, either.
propriété	*ownership* or *property*.
signification	*signification*. Another term that is developed more fully in *IIS* and in other later writings. *Meaning* has been used on occasion, as well as *significance* when the context suggested it.
technique	*technique*. The Greek *techne*, or "know-how" in the broadest sense, as Castoriadis says at one point. Contrasted with *technology*, with its socially instituted *logos*—the specific set of techniques chosen by, and used in, a given society. This distinction is clearly made in the "Socialism Is the Transformation of Work" section of *CS II*.

Appendix D: Supplement to Appendix D, Volume 1: Non-10/18 Writings of Cornelius Castoriadis in English

1968	"France 1968" (this final chapter is a loose, partial translation and paraphrasing of the end of "La Révolution anticipée"), [Maurice Brinton], *Paris: May 1968* (London: Solidarity, June 1968, and London: Dark Star Press and Rebel Press, 1986), pp. 50–55.
1983b	UPDATE: Reprinted in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy.* Hereafter *PPA.*
1985	UPDATE: Reprinted in *PPA,* along with a translation of the discussion printed in 1977a, Appendix E, and reprinted in 1986a, Appendix E, *PSW 1.*
1986	UPDATE: Reprinted in *PPA.*
1986b	"The Fate of Marxism" (same as 1966), in *The Anarchist Papers,* ed. Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos (Buffalo and Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1986), pp. 75–84.
1986c	"Beating the Retreat into Private Life" (edited extract from BBC broadcast, "Voices," of Michael Ignatieff; other participant: Christopher Lasch), *Listener,* March 27, 1986, pp. 20–21.
1987b	CORRECTION: *Free Associations,* 12 (1988), pp. 39–51. (See 1988e, Appendix D.)
1987d	*The Crisis of Culture and the State* (Center for Humanistic Studies [University of Minnesota] Occasional Papers, 16 (1987), 20 pp. (Reprinted in *PPA.*)
1987e	"Communication" (same text as 1987c, Appendix D, *PSW 1*), *Thesis Eleven,* 16 (1987), pp. 125–26.
1987f	"The Movements of the Sixties," trans. Franco Schiavone and

revised by David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 18/19 (1987), pp. 20–31. (Previously designated as 1988b, Appendix D, *PSW 1*.)

1987g "The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain" (same as 1984b, Appendix D, *PSW 1*), in *Identity: The Real Me* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), pp. 39–43.

1988b UPDATE: See 1987f, Appendix D.

1988c "Intellectuals and History" (translation of 1987c, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Salmagundi*, 80 (Fall 1988), pp. 161–69. (Reprinted in *PPA*.)

1988d "The Gorbachev Interlude" (same as 1988a, Appendix D, *PSW 1*, and 1989a, Appendix D), *Thesis Eleven*, 20 (1988), pp. 5–29.

1988e "The First Institution of Society and Second-Order Institutions," trans. David Ames Curtis, *Free Associations*, 12 (1988), pp. 39–51. (N.B.: Correction for 1987b, Appendix D, *PSW 1*.)

1988f "Marx Today: The Tragicomical Paradox" (interview; same as 1984d, Appendix D, *PSW 1*, but with corrections by author), *Solidarity Journal*, 17 (Summer 1988), pp. 7–15.

1989a "The Gorbachev Interlude" (newly edited version of 1988a, Appendix D, *PSW 1*, and 1988d, Appendix D), in Andrew Arato and Ferenc Fehér, *Gorbachev: The Debate* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 61–83.

1989b "Power, Politics, Autonomy," in *Zwischenbetrachtungen im Prozess der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 453–81. (Reedited for *PPA*.)

1989c "The End of Philosophy?" *Salmagundi*, 82/83 (Spring/Summer 1989), pp. 3–23. (Reprinted in *PPA*.)

1989d "The State of the Subject Today" (translation of 1986d, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 24 (1989), pp. 5–43.

1989e "The State of the Subject Today" (same as 1989d, Appendix D, but full of typographical errors), trans. David Ames Curtis, *American Imago*, 46:4 (Winter 1989), pp. 371–412.

1990a "Individual, Society, Rationality, History" (translation of 1988e, Appendix E), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 25 (1990), pp. 59–90. (Reprinted in *PPA*.)

1990b "Does the Idea of Revolution Still Make Sense?" (translation of 1989d, Appendix E), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 26 (1990), pp. 123–38.

1990c "The Pulverization of Marxism-Leninism" (translation of 1990f, Appendix E), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Salmagundi*, 88/89 (Fall 1990/Winter 1991), pp. 371–83.

1991a *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, ed. David Ames Curtis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Includes 1983b, 1985, 1986, Appendix D, *PSW 1*; 1987d, 1988c, 1989b, 1989c, 1990a, Appendix D; also, "The Social-Historical: Mode of

Being, Problems of Knowledge" (see 1992b, Appendix D) and "Dead End?" (translation of 1987g, Appendix E).
1991b "Time and Creation," in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, John Bender and David E. Wellbery, eds. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 38–66.
1991c Interview, in *Free Associations*, 24 (1991), pp. 483-506.
1992a "The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism," *Thesis Eleven*, 31 (1992), pp. 14–23.
1992b "The Social-Historical: Mode of Being, Problems of Knowledge," *Thought*, forthcoming. (Previously published in *PPA*.)
1992c "Logic, Imagination, Reflection" (translation of 1991m, Appendix E), trans. David Ames Curtis, *American Imago*, 49:1 (Spring 1992), pp.3-33.
1992d "Reflections on Racism" (translation of 1987a, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), trans. David Ames Curtis, *Thesis Eleven*, 32 (1992), forthcoming.
1992e "Institution of Society and Religion" (translation of 1982d/1986a, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), trans. Stathis Gougouris, *Emergences* (forthcoming).

Appendix E: Supplement to Appendix E, Volume 1: Non-10/18 Writings of Cornelius Castoriadis in French

1971b — Under pseudonym of Pierre Chaulieu, "Lukács et Rosa" (extract from "Note sur Lukács et Rosa Luxembourg," *S. ou B.*, 26 [November 1958]), reprinted in Daniel Guérin, *Rosa Luxembourg et la spontanéité révolutionnaire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), pp. 157–58.

1976* — "Réflexions sur le 'développement' et la 'rationalité,' " trans. Mme de Venoge in *Esprit*, May 1976, pp. 897–920. English translation, see 1985, Appendix D, *PSW 1*.

1977a* — "Réflexions sur le 'développement' et la 'rationalité' " (see 1976, Appendix E), in *Le Mythe du développement*, ed. Candido Mendès (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 205–40; includes a 1976 round-table discussion. (Now in *DH*.) English translation, see 1991a, Appendix D.

1977b — "Entretien avec Cornelius Castoriadis" (interview), *Le Monde*, December 13, 1977, pp. 1–2; December 14, 1977, p. 2.

1980b — "Francisco Varela, *Principles of Biological Autonomy*" (review), *Le Débat*, 1 (May 1980), pp. 126–27.

1981c — "Vers la stratocratie" (excerpt from *Devant la guerre*), *Le Débat*, 12 (May 1981), pp. 5–17. (Editor's introduction, pp. 3–4.)

1982f — "Le Pouvoir au bout du char" (interview), *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 2, 1982, pp. 14–19.

1982g — "L'Occident est déjà en retard d'une bataille," *Paris-Match*, February 5, 1982, pp. 80–81.

1982h — "La Vraie Menace Russe" (interview), *Paris-Match*, October 30, 1982, pp. 3ff.

1982i "La Russie ne veut pas la guerre: elle veut la victoire" (interview), *La Vie*, 1942 (November 18, 1982), p. 51.

1983b* CORRECTION: The original title of the article, as published in *Le Monde*, was "Une triple menace."

1983f "La Double découverte de l'imagination par Aristote" (version of 1978c, Appendix E, *PSW 1*, reprint: see 1986a, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), *Proceedings of the World Congress on Aristotle*, vol. 4 (Thessaloniki, August 7, 1978; Athens: Publication of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1983), pp. 210–14.

1983g "Sur l'Union soviétique," *Le Débat*, 24 (March 1983), pp. 190–92.

1983h "Je ne suis moins esclave de mon maître," *Information et réflexion libertaire* (Lyon), 51 (Summer 1983), pp. 33–35.

1985* UPDATE: English translation, see 1988e, Appendix D.

1985b** *Socialisme ou Barbarie. Anthologie: Grèves ouvrières en France, 1953–57*, facsimile reproduction of *S. ou B.* texts, including articles by Castoriadis (Mauléon: Acratie, 1985).

1986a** UPDATE: English translation, see 1991a, Appendix D.

1986c* UPDATE: English translation, see 1987f, Appendix D.

1986d* UPDATE: Now in *Le Monde Morcelé: Carrefours du labyrinthe III* (Paris: Seuil, 1990). Hereafter *MM*. English translation, see 1989d, Appendix D.

1986e "Les Enjeux actuels de la démocratie," *Possibles*, 10:3/4 (Spring/Summer 1986), pp. 313–29.

1986f "Castoriadis, un déçu du gauche-droite" (interview), *Le Monde*, July 12, 1986, p. 15.

1986g "Les Ambiguïtés de l'apolitisme" (partial publication of an interview), *Libération*, December 11, 1986, p. 14.

1987a* UPDATE: Now in *MM*. English translation, see 1992d, Appendix D.

1987c* UPDATE: Now in *MM*. English translation, see 1988c/1991a, Appendix D.

1987d* UPDATE: For expanded version, see 1990b, Appendix E. English versions, see 1988a, Appendix D, *PSW 1*; 1988d and 1989a, Appendix D.

1987e "Imaginaire social et changement scientifique" (Action Locale Bellevue lecture, May 23, 1985), *Sens et place des connaissances dans la société* (Paris: CNRS, 1987), pp. 161–83.

1987f "Les Significations imaginaires" (Radio-France interview), *Création et désordre. Recherches et pensées contemporaines* (Paris: L'Originel/Radio-France, 1987), pp. 65–100. See also "L'Auto-organisation, du physique au politique" (Radio-France interview), ibid., pp. 39–46.

1987g* "Voie sans issue?" in *Les Scientifiques parlent*, ed. Albert Jacquard (Paris: Hachette, 1987), pp. 261–98. (Now in *MM*.) English translation, see 1991a, Appendix D.

1987h "L'Histoire du savoir nous a pris par la peau du cou et nous a jetés au milieu de l'Océan Pacifique de l'Etre en nous disant: 'maintenant nagez!' " *Lettre Science Culture*, 28 (October 1987).

1987i "Libérer la pensée politique," *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 75 (1987), pp. 195–98.

1988b* "Les Mouvements des années soixante" (same as 1986c, Appendix E, *PSW 1*), reprinted in new edition of *La Brèche* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1988), pp. 183–97. English translation, see 1987f, Apppendix D.

1988c "La Construction intellectuelle, médiatique et politique du mouvement étudiant de l'automne 1986" (Sorbonne Colloquium, May 1987, organized by Political Science students, University of Paris-I; other participants: Patrick Champagne, Luc Ferry, Bernard Lacroix, Jacques Lagroye, and Didier Lapeyronnie), *Politix*, 1 (Winter 1988), pp. 8–31.

1988d* "Pouvoir, politique, autonomie," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 93 (January 1988), pp. 81–104. (Now in *MM*.) English version, see 1991a, Appendix D.

1988e* "Individu, société, rationalité, histoire," *Esprit*, February 1988, pp. 89–113. (Now in *MM*.) English translation, see 1990a and 1991a.

1988f "Castoriadis: périsse le consensus" (interview), *L'Express*, May 27, 1988, pp. 112 and 114.

1988g "L'Auto-constituante" (interview), *EspacesTemps*, 38/39 (1988), pp. 51–55.

1988h "Au sujet de 'Parcours du ressentiment,' " *Lignes*, 4 (1988), pp. 223–24. (See 1988f, Appendix G, for reply.)

1988i "La Russie, premier candidat à la révolution sociale," *Iztok*, 16 (November 1988), pp. 29–34.

1988j "L'Utilité de la connaissance dans les sciences de l'homme et dans les savoirs" (round-table discussion), *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 79 (1988), pp. 87–131 (Castoriadis: pp. 91–95, 99–101, 102–3, 106, 107–8, 113–15, 116, 117–18, 122, 128–29, and 130).

1989a "Fait et à faire," in *Autonomie et autotransformation de la société. La Philosophie militante de Cornelius Castoriadis*, ed. Giovanni Busino (Geneva: Droz, 1989), and *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 86 (December 1989), pp. 457–514.

1989b "Quelques Questions à C. Castoriadis" (interview), *Sous les pinceaux, la Révolution* (Lyon: Catherine Bernard, 1989), pp. 64–65.

1989c "Psychanalyse et Politique," *Lettre Internationale*, 21 (Summer 1989), pp. 54–57. (Now in *MM*.)

1989d* "L'Idée de révolution a-t-elle encore un sens?" (interview), *Le Débat*, 57 (November 1989), pp. 213–24. (Now in *MM*.) English translation, see 1990b, Appendix D.

1989e "Quand l'Est bascule vers l'Ouest" (interview), *Construire* (Switzerland), 44 (November 1, 1989), pp. 38–39.

1989f* "La Révolution devant les théologiens," *Lettre Internationale*, 23 (Winter 1989–1990), pp. 70–73. (Now in *MM*.)

1990a "Pour soi et subjectivité," *Colloque de Cerisy. Arguments pour une méthode (Autour d'Edgar Morin)* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), pp. 118–27.

1990b** *La Société bureaucratique* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990). (Reprint of *SB 1* and *SB 2*, in a one-volume edition, with the addition of a new preface; "La Chute de Khrouchtchev" [reprinted from *S. ou B.*, 38 (October 1964)]; and an expanded version of 1987d, Appendix E, *PSW 1*, entitled "L'Interlude Gorbatchev"). English translation, see *PSW 1–3*.

1990c** *Le Monde Morcelé: Carrefours du labyrinthe III* (Paris: Seuil, 1990). Includes 1986d, 1987a (as "Réflexions sur le racisme"), 1987c, Appendix E, *PSW 1*; 1987g, 1988d, 1988e, 1989c, 1989d, 1989e, Appendix E; and "L'Epoque du conformisme généralisé" (translation of a version of 1992a, Appendix D, "La 'fin de la philosophie'?" (translation of 1989c, Appendix D), "Temps et création" (translation of 1991b, Appendix D).

1990d "La Tragique supériorité de l'Occident" (interview), *L'Hebdo* (Lausanne), January 10, 1990, pp. 44–45.

1990e In "Cinq Pièges pour l'autre Europe" (excerpts from Sorbonne colloquium on Eastern Europe, January 18, 1990), *Nouvel Observateur*, February 1, 1990, pp. 12 and 18.

1990f* "L'Effondrement du marxisme-leninisme," *Le Monde*, April 24–25, p. 90. English translation, see 1990c, Appendix D.

1990g "Donner une signification à nos vies" (interview), *Le Monde*, November 30, 1990, p. 28.

1990h "La Politique en crise" (interview), *Politis*, December 6, 1990, pp. 64–66.

1991a "Entretien avec Cornelius Castoriadis" (interview), *Transversales Science/Culture*, 7 (1991), pp. 18–19.

1991b "L'Invité de Vendredi" (interview), *Vendredi*, 85 (January 11, 1991), p. 23.

1991c "De toute façon, l'Occident est piégé!" (interview), *Télérama*, 2140 (January 19, 1990), pp. 8–10.

1991d "Les Occidentaux sont piégés" (interview), *Journal d'Ouest-France*, January 29, 1991, p. 3.

1991e "La Guerre du Golfe mise à plat," *Libération*, February 5, 1991, p. 14.

1991f "Trois intellectuels face à la guerre" (summary of presentations by Castoriadis, Alain Touraine, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet to a discussion of the Gulf war at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, February 11, 1991), *Politis*, February 14, 1991, pp. 32–33.

1991g	“Entre le vide occidental et le mythe arabe” (debate with Edgar Morin), *Le Monde*, March 19, 1991, p. 2.
1991h	“Qu’est-ce qui est mort samedi?” (interview), *Libération*, August 28, 1991, p. 11.
1991i	“Péripéties et illumination” (interview), *Humanisme*, 199/200 (September 1991), pp. 98–104.
1991j	“Fragments d’un séminaire philosophique,” *Humanisme*, 199/200 (September 1991), pp. 104–6.
1991k	“Le Délabrement de l’Occident” (interview), *Esprit*, December 1991, pp. 36–54.
1991l	“Un Entretien avec Cornélius Castoriadis,” *Le Monde*, December 10, 1991, p. 2.
1991m*	“Logique, imagination, réflexion,” in *L’Inconscient et la science*, ed. Roger Dorey (Paris: Dunod, 1991), pp. 9–36. English translation, see 1992c, Appendix D.
1991n	“De la monade à l’autonomie” (interview), *Chimères*, 14 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 95–124.
1991o	Transcriptions from Castoriadis’s seminars at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Available from David Ames Curtis: 27, rue Froidevaux, Paris, France 75014.
1992a	Lecture in *De la fin de l’histoire* (Paris: Felin, 1992), pp. 62–71 and 89–91.
1992b	“Depuis quarante ans, la société tourne à vide” (interview), *L’Evénement du jeudi*, March 26–April 1, 1992, p. 128.

*A complete English-language version exists; see Appendix D, *PSW 1* or *3*.
**A partial English-language version exists; see Appendix D, *PSW 1* or *3*.

Appendix F: Supplement to Appendix F, Volume 1: English-Language Critical Assessments of and Responses to Castoriadis

1968 Anonymous, "Student Movements in France" (includes review of *La Brèche*), *Times Literary Supplement*, July 25, 1968, pp. 769–70.

1973 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), trans. Joseph Bien; see p. 232. (Castoriadis is the "Marxist friend" referred to in the text of this 1955 essay.)

1974 Anonymous, "Sectarian Struggles" (review of *SB 1*, *SB 2*, *EMO 1*, and *EMO 2*), *Times Literary Supplement*, October 11, 1974, p. 1110.

1977c André Gorz, "Sartre and the Deaf," *Telos*, 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 106–8.

1977d Edgar Morin, "The Noise and the Message," *Telos*, 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 110–11.

1977e Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Response to the Master Censors," *Telos*, 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 116–19.

1978 Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 481.

1979d Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (New York and Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 129–34.

1982h Scott McConnell, "Raymond Aron, *Le Spectateur Engagé*; Cornelius Castoriadis, *Devant la Guerre*" (reviews), *Commentary*, 73 (April 1982), pp. 85–88.

1983a Robert W. Clawson, "*Devant la guerre*, vol. 1, *Les Réalités*" (review), *Slavic Review*, 42 (Summer 1983), p. 308.

1984c Francisca Goldsmith, "Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the*

Labyrinth" (review), *Library Journal*, 109 (March 1, 1984), p. 494.

1984d Bernard Flynn, "*Crossroads in the Labyrinth*" (review), *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 10 (Spring 1984), pp. 179–83.

1986b Axel Honneth, "Rescuing the Revolution with an Ontology: On Cornelius Castoriadis's Theory of Society" (translation of "Eine ontologische Rettung der Revolution . . . ," *Merkur*, 39 [November 1985], pp. 807–21), trans. Gary Robinson, *Thesis Eleven*, 14 (1986), pp. 62–78.

1986c William H. Austin, "*Crossroads in the Labyrinth*" (review), *Religious Studies Review*, 12 (April 1986), pp. 138–39.

1987c Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse on Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 318–35 and nn. 1–3, p. 419.

1987d Brent A. Nelson, "Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*" (review), *Library Journal*, 112 (August 1987), p. 128.

1987e Shamlal, "A Toothless Radicalism" (review of *IIS*), *Times of India*, September 26, 1987.

1988a Dick Howard, "Cornelius Castoriadis: Ontology as Political," in afterword to second edition (see 1977a, Appendix F, *PSW 1*) of *The Marxian Legacy* (London: Macmillan, and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 321–36.

1988b Jean-François Lyotard, *Perigrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 16 and 55–75.

1988c Alex Richards, "The Academisation of Castoriadis," *Edinburgh Review*, 78/79 (1988), pp. 226–31.

1988d Tom Osborne, "On Castoriadis," *Edinburgh Review*, 78/79 (1988), pp. 232–34.

1988e C. A. Linden, "Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*" (review), *Choice*, April 1988, p. 1311.

1988f Patrick Murray and Jeanne A. Schuler, "Post-Marxism in a French Context," *History of European Ideas*, 9 (1988), pp. 321–24 and 329–31.

1988g Richard Rorty, "Unger, Castoriadis, and the Romance of a National Future," *Northwestern University Law Review*, 82:2 (1988), pp. 335–51.

1988h A. Sica, "Castoriadis, Cornelius, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*" (reviewed with Giddens's *Social Theory Today*), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 500 (November 1988), pp. 160–61.

1988i Paul Anderson, "Too Marxist to Be Marxist" (review of *PSW 1* and *PSW 2*), *Tribune*, December 23, 1988.

1988j Neil Lazarus, "*The Imaginary Institution of Society*" (review), *Sociological Review*, 36 (1988), pp. 579–83.

1988k György Széll, "Participation, Workers' Control, and Self-

Management," *Current Sociology*, 36:3 (Winter 1988); see pp. 91–94, 104, and 200.

1989a Carl Boggs, "*Political and Social Writings*, Volume I . . . Volume 2" (review), *Zeta*, 2:1 (January 1989), pp. 75–77.

1989b John Rundell, "From the Shores of Reason to the Horizon of Meaning: Some Remarks on Habermas' and Castoriadis' Theories of Culture," *Thesis Eleven*, 22 (1989), pp. 5–24.

1989c Johann Arnason, "Culture and Imaginary Significations," *Thesis Eleven*, 22 (1989), pp. 25–45.

1989d Hans Joas, "Institutionalization as a Creative Process: The Sociological Importance of Cornelius Castoriadis's Political Philosophy," trans. Raymond Meyer, *American Journal of Sociology*, 94:5 (March 1989), pp. 1184–99.

1989e Richard Rorty, "Comments on Castoriadis's 'The End of Philosophy?' " *Salmagundi*, 82/83 (Spring/Summer 1989), pp. 24–30.

1989f Peter Beilharz, "Cornelius Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings*, Volume 1 . . . Volume 2" (review), *Thesis Eleven*, 24 (1989), pp. 132–41.

1989g Charles Whitney, "Bacon's *Instauratio*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50:3 (July 1989); see pp. 386–87.

1989h Moishe Gonzales, "Exorcising *Perestroika*" (includes review of "The Gorbachev Interlude" [see 1988a, Appendix D, *PSW 1*; 1988d, 1989a, Appendix D]), *Telos*, 81 (Fall 1989), pp. 141–47.

1989i Andrew Arato, "Facing Russia"; Johann P. Arnason, "The Imaginary Constitution of Modernity"; J. M. Bernstein, "Praxis and Aporia"; David Ames Curtis, "Socialism or Barbarism: The Alternative Presented in the Work of Cornelius Castoriadis"; Ferenc Fehér, "Castoriadis and the Redefinition of Socialism"; Agnes Heller, "With Castoriadis to Aristotle"; Sunil Khilnani, "Castoriadis and Modern Political Theory"; Joel Whitebook, "Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche," in *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 86 (December 1989) and also as *Autonomie et autotransformation de la société. La Philosophie militante de Cornelius Castoriadis*, ed. Giovanni Busino (Geneva: Droz, 1989). Also includes French, Italian, and German articles listed in 1989b, Appendix G.

1989j Tim Wohlforth, "The Great Beast" (letter), *Solidarity*, 22/23 (Winter 1989–90), p. 22.

1990a Joel Whitebook, reprint of 1989i, Appendix F, in *Praxis International*, 9:4 (January 1990), pp. 347–64.

1990b Ravi Arvind Palat, "Political Institutions and the State: Socialism and the Self-Constitution of Society" (review of *PSW 1* and *PSW 2*), *Contemporary Sociology*, 19:3 (1990), pp. 400–402.

1990c Martin Jay, "Unorthodox Leftist" (review of *PSW 1* and *PSW 2*), *Dissent*, Summer 1990, pp. 400–402.

1990d Johann Arnason, "The Theory of Modernity and the Problematic of Democracy," *Thesis Eleven*, 26 (1990), pp. 33–36; see also, pp. 38–41.

1990e Kevin Robins and James Cornford, "Bringing It All Back Home," *Futures*, 22:8 (October 1990), pp. 870–79.

1990f Hans Furth, "The 'Radical Imaginary' Underlying Social Institutions: Its Developmental Base" (English version of 1989b, Appendix G), *Human Development*, 33 (1990), pp. 202–13, followed by Gustav Jahoda, "Commentary," ibid., pp. 214–16, and Hans Furth, "Reply," ibid., pp. 217–19.

1992 David Ames Curtis, "Cornelius Castoriadis," in *Social Theory: A Guide to Central Thinkers*, ed. Peter Beilharz (North Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1992).

Appendix G: French-Language Critical Assessments of and Responses to Castoriadis

1955*	Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Les Aventures de la dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955); see pp. 312–13. (Castoriadis is "un marxiste de mes amis" referred to in the text.) English translation, see 1973, Appendix F.
1957a	Gérard Genette, "Notes sur *Socialisme ou Barbarie*," *Arguments*, 3 (April 1957), pp. 8–13.
1957b	Edgar Morin, "Solecisme ou Barbarisme," *Arguments*, 3 (April 1957), pp. 13–19.
1957c	Claude Lefort, "Sur l'article de Morin," *Arguments*, 3 (April 1957), pp. 19–21.
1969a	Yvon Bourdet, "Les Contradictions de l'hétérogestion," *Autogestion et Socialisme*, 8 (June 1969), pp. 135–70, esp. 166–70.
1969b	Yvon Bourdet, "Les Conditions de possibilité de l'autogestion," *Autogestion et Socialisme*, 9/10 (September 1969), pp. 59–88, esp. 70–76.
1971*	Richard Gombin, *Les Origines du gauchisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1971); see pp. 40–48, 70, 116, 122–23, 128–38, and 166–67 for references to *S. ou B.* and to P. Chaulieu (Castoriadis). English translation, see 1975b, Appendix F, *PSW 1*.
1973a	Henri Simon, *I.C.O., un point de vue* (Henri Simon, 34, rue St. Sébastien, 75011 Paris); see pp. 1–2.
1973b	Alain Guillerm, "Le Retour de "socialisme et barbarie" (review of *SB 1*), *L'Homme et la société*, 29/30 (July 1973), pp. 309–11.
1973c	Louis Janover, "Castoriadis, Cornélius. *La Société bureaucratique*" (review), *Economies et Sociétés*, 16 (1973), pp. 1998–2000.

1974a Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie libidinale* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), pp. 142–46.

1974b Henri Aubier, "Cornelius Castoriadis. *L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*" (review), *Autogestion et Socialisme*, 28/29 (December 1974), pp. 190–93.

1975a "De la scission avec *Socialisme ou Barbarie* à la rupture avec ICO: entretien avec H. Simon," *Anti-Mythes*, 6 (1975), passim.

1975b Serge Bricianer, "Introduction. Un Itinéraire marxiste," in Karl Korsch, *Marxisme et contre-révolution dans la première maitié du vingtième siècle*, ed. Serge Bricianer (Paris: Seuil, 1975); see pp. 62–65.

1975c Taly, "Une Tentative de dépassement du marxisme; Socialisme ou Barbarie," *Supplément à Révolution Internationale. Bullétin d'études et de discussion*, 11 (January 1975), pp. 2–11.

1975d "Entretien avec C. Lefort" (April 19, 1975), *Anti-Mythes*, 14 (November 1975), passim.

1976a Yvon Bourdet, "Marxisme et théorie révolutionnaire. Lecture de Cardan, Relecture de Castoriadis" (review), *Autogestion et Socialisme*, 33/34 (January 1976), pp. 159–76.

1976b Jacques Julliard, "La Fusée Castoriadis" (review of *IIS*, *SB 1*, *SB 2*, *EMO 1*, and *EMO 2*), *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 26, 1976, pp. 54–56.

1976c Hervé Cronel, "Cornélius Castoriadis: *L'Institution imaginaire de la société*" (review), *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, 285 (September 1976), pp. 97–104.

1976d Paul Thibaud, "Créativité sociale et révolution," *Esprit*, September 1976, pp. 213–24.

1976e "Entretien avec D. Mothé" (June 8, 1976), *Anti-Mythes*, 18 (September 1976), passim.

1976f Yvon Bourdet, *Qu'est-ce qui fait courir le militants?* (Paris: Stock, 1976), pp. 286–88.

1977a* Edgar Morin, "Le bruit et le message," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, June 27, 1977, p. 38. English translation, see 1977d, Appendix F.

1977b* André Gorz, "Sartre et les sourds," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, June 27, 1977, p. 39. English translation, see 1977c, Appendix F.

1977c* Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Réponse aux maîtres censeurs," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, June 27, 1977, p. 40. English translation, see 1977e, Appendix F.

1978a Domenico Tarizzo, *L'Anarchie. Histoire des mouvements libertaires dans le monde* (Paris: Senghers, 1978), pp. 269–70, 286, and 301.

1978b Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, "Corrigés" (includes review of *CL*), *Le Monde*, February 3, 1978, pp. 13 and 16.

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*A complete English-language version exists; see Appendix F, *PSW 1* or *3*.

**A partial English-language version exists; see Appendix F, *PSW 1* or *3*.

Appendix H: Errata for *PSW 1* and *PSW 2*

PSW 1, p. 232, line 17: Read "cheek" for "check."
PSW 2, p. 307, line 23: Read "organizations" for "organization."

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